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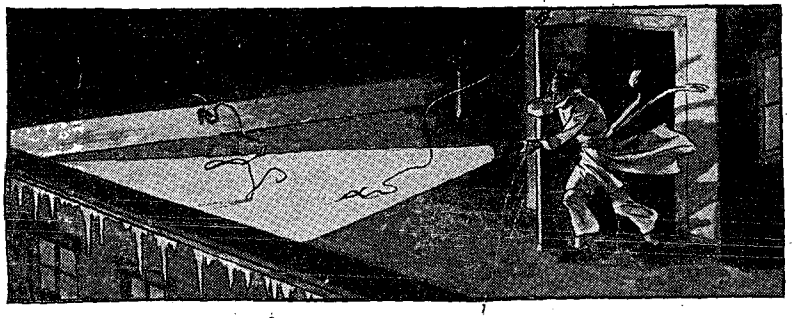
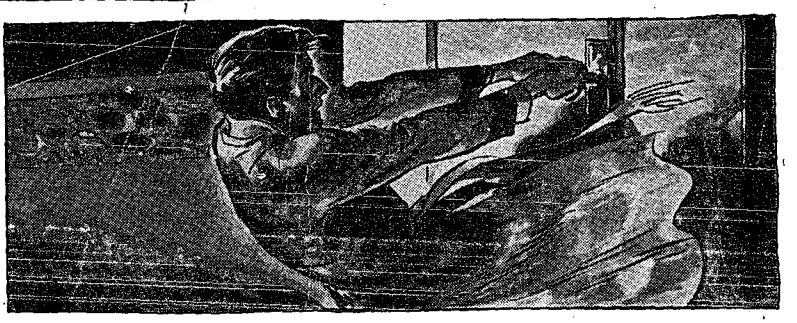
"I CHEATED DEATH ON A SKYSCRAPER ROOF!"

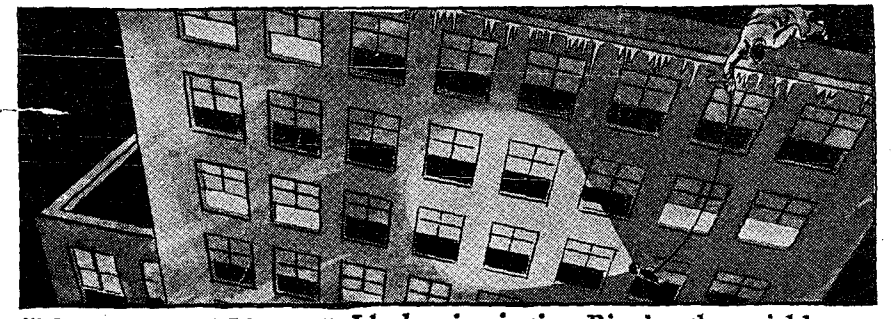
A true experience of ALLEN H. GIPSON, *New York City*



"ONE BITTERLY COLD NIGHT, my radio went dead," writes Mr. Gipson. "Suspecting that the howling wind had blown down the aerial, I threw on a dressing gown, grabbed my flashlight, and headed for the fifteenth floor roof.

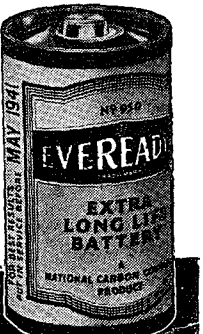
"AN ICY WIND chilled me as I searched for and found the aerial. Making hasty repairs, I started back down. To my horror, I found myself locked out. I battered the door. I shouted. But the wind howled me down.





"NEARLY FROZEN TO DEATH, I had an inspiration. Ripping the aerial loose, I tied the lighted flashlight to it, and swung it over the side of the building. Luckily the light attracted someone in an apartment below. Thanks to those dependable 'Eveready' *fresh* DATED batteries I was saved.

(*Signed*) *Allen H. Gipson*"



The word "Eveready" is a registered trade-mark of National Carbon Company, Inc.

FRESH BATTERIES LAST LONGER... *Look for the* **DATE-LINE**

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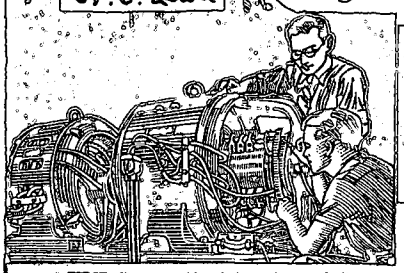
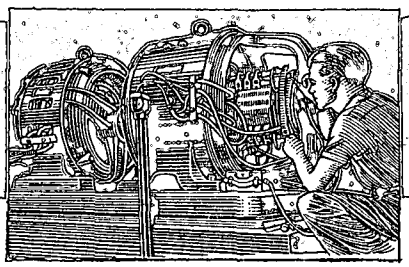
QUICK EASY WAY TO TRAIN FOR ELECTRICITY IN 12 WEEKS by Actual SHOP WORK NOT BOOKS



1 FIRST--You are told and shown how to do it.



THEN--You do the job yourself.

WANT TO EARN MORE MONEY?

Have you ever dreamed of holding down a **steady, good pay job?** Have you ever dreamed of doing the work you really like in a job that holds promise of a **real future** in the years ahead?

Well, we all know that you can't get the good things in life by just **dreaming** about them. Hundreds of fellows are today holding down mighty fine jobs with prospects of a bright future. They are filling these jobs because they had the foresight to equip themselves with the **right kind of training.**

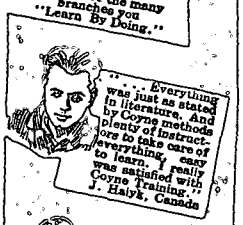
Most of these men were only average fellows a short time ago, but the proper training helped to lift them out of the low pay ranks of unskilled workers. The same opportunity is now offered to **you.**

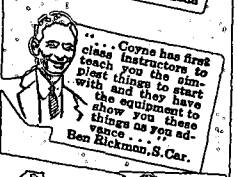
The great fascinating field of **ELECTRICITY** offers a real future to many men and young men who are willing to prepare for a place in this giant industry.

Here at my school in Chicago, the **world's Electrical Center,** you can get **12 weeks' Shop Training in ELECTRICITY** and **an extra 4 weeks Course in Radio,** that can help give you your start towards a better job.

You will be trained on actual equipment and machinery and because of our method of training, you **don't need previous experience or a lot of education.** Many of my successful graduates never even completed Grammar School. Here in my school you **work** on generators, motors, dynamos, you do house wiring, wind armatures and do actual work in many other branches of electricity and right now I'm including valuable instruction in **Diesel, Electric Refrigeration** and **Air Conditioning** at no extra cost. Our practical shop methods make it **easier to learn—First** the instructors **tell you how** a thing should be done—**then they show** you how it should be done—**then you do the actual work yourself.**

AN EXTRA 4 WEEKS COURSE IN RADIO INCLUDED


"... Everything was just as stated in literature. And by Coyne methods plenty of instructors to take care of everything, easy to learn. I really was satisfied with Coyne Training."
J. Halyk, Canada


"... Coyne has first class instructors to teach you the simplest things to start with and they have the equipment to show you these things as you advance ..."
Ben Rickman, S.Car.

I'LL FINANCE MOST OF YOUR TRAINING

You can get this training **first**—then **if you are short of money you can pay for most of it later** in **easy monthly payments,** starting **60 days** after your 12 weeks' training period is over **—then you have 10 months** to complete your payments. If you need **part time work** to help out with expenses while training in my shops, my employment department will help you get it. Then after graduation this department will give you valuable **lifetime employment service.**

Send the coupon today for all details. When I get it I'll send you my big free book containing dozens of pictures of students at work in my shops. I'll also tell you about my **"Pay After Graduation" plan,** how many **earn while learning** and how we help our students **after graduation.** Fill in, clip coupon, **mail today for your start toward a brighter future.**

MAIL NOW

H. C. LEWIS, President

COYNE ELECTRICAL SCHOOL

500 S. Paulina St., Dept. 31-84, Chicago

H. C. LEWIS, Pres., COYNE ELECTRICAL SCHOOL
500 S. Paulina St., Dept. 31-84, Chicago, Ill.

Dear Sir: Please send me free your big catalog and full particulars of your present offer, also your "Pay-Tuition-After-Graduation" Plan, and also your **Extra 4 Weeks Radio Course.**

Name.....

Address.....

City..... State.....

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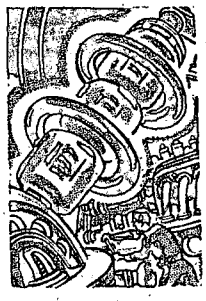
THRILLING WONDER STORIES

The Magazine of Prophetic Fiction

Vol. XIX, No. 3
March, 1941

Next Issue



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ON THE COVER

The cover painting by E. K. Bergey depicts a scene from Robert Arthur's story, THE INDESTRUCTIBLE.

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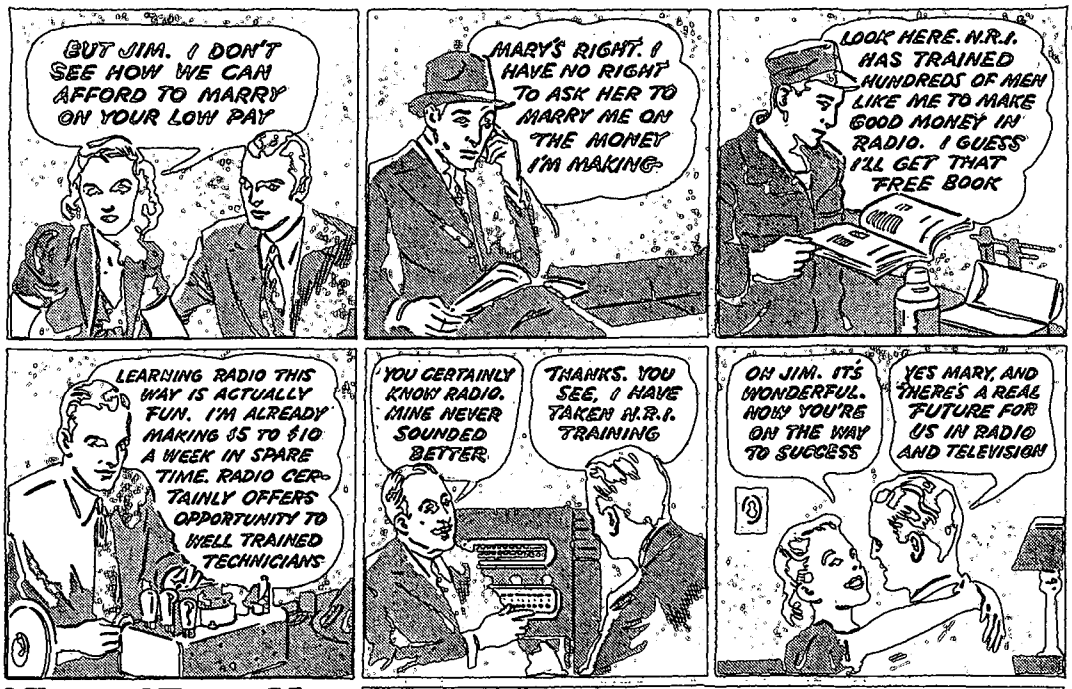
BUT JIM. I DON'T SEE HOW WE CAN AFFORD TO MARRY ON YOUR LOW PAY
MARY'S RIGHT. I HAVE NO RIGHT TO ASK HER TO MARRY ME ON THE MONEY I'M MAKING
LOOK HERE. N.R.I. HAS TRAINED HUNDREDS OF MEN LIKE ME TO MAKE GOOD MONEY IN RADIO. I GUESS I'LL GET THAT FREE BOOK
LEARNING RADIO THIS WAY IS ACTUALLY FUN. I'M ALREADY MAKING $5 TO $10 A WEEK IN SPARE TIME. RADIO CERTAINLY OFFERS OPPORTUNITY TO WELL TRAINED TECHNICIANS
YOU CERTAINLY KNOW RADIO. MINE NEVER SOUNDED BETTER
THANKS. YOU SEE, I HAVE TAKEN N.R.I. TRAINING
OH JIM. IT'S WONDERFUL. NOW YOU'RE ON THE WAY TO SUCCESS
YES MARY, AND THERE'S A REAL FUTURE FOR US IN RADIO AND TELEVISION

I Trained These Men

Chief Operator Broadcasting Station

Before I completed your lessons, I obtained my Radio Broadcast Operator's license and immediately joined Station WMPC where I am now Chief Operator.
HOLLIS F. HAYES
327 Madison St.
Lapeer, Michigan

Service Manager for Four Stores

I was working in a garage when I enrolled with N. R. I. I am now Radio service manager for the M..... Furniture Co. for their four stores.
JAMES E. RYAN
119 Pebble Court
Fall River, Mass.

$10 to $20 a Week in Spare Time

I repaired some Radio sets when I was on my tenth lesson. I really don't see how you can give so much for such a small amount of money. I made $600 in a year and a half, and I have made an average of $10 to $20 a week — just spare time.
JOHN JERRY
1529 Arapahoe St., Room 17,
Denver, Colorado

DRAFT REGISTRANTS!

If you **ARE** called, and are then a Radio Technician, you'll be eligible for a communications branch of the service; in line for technical ratings with extra pay.
If you **ARE NOT** called, you now have an opportunity to get into Radio at a time when the Government is pouring millions of dollars into the Radio industry to buy Defense equipment, on top of boom civilian Radio business. Either way — it's smart to train for RADIO NOW!

I WILL TRAIN YOU AT HOME *in your spare time for a* GOOD JOB IN RADIO

J. E. Smith, President Nat. Radio Inst. Est. 25 years

If you can't see a future in your present job; feel you'll never make much more money, if you're in a seasonal field, subject to lay offs, IT'S TIME NOW to investigate Radio. Trained Radio Technicians make good money, and you don't have to give up your present job or leave home to learn Radio. I train you at home nights in your spare time.

Why Many Radio Technicians Make $30, $40, $50 a Week

Radio broadcasting stations employ operators, technicians. Radio manufacturers employ testers, inspectors, servicemen in good-pay jobs. Radio jobbers, dealers, employ installation and servicemen. Many Radio Technicians open their own Radio sales and repair businesses and make $30, $40, $50 a week. Others hold their regular jobs and make $5 to $10 a week fixing Radios in spare time. Automobile, Police, Aviation, Commercial Radio, Loudspeaker Systems, Electronic Devices are other fields *offering opportunities for which N. R. I. gives* the required knowledge of Radio. Television promises to open good jobs soon.

Many Make $5 to $10 a Week Extra in Spare Time While Learning

The day you enroll, I start sending you Extra Money Job Sheets—start showing you how to do Radio repair jobs. Throughout your Course I send plans and directions which have helped many make $5 to $10 a week extra in spare time while learning. I send special Radio equipment to conduct experiments and build circuits. This 50-50 training method makes learning at home interesting, fascinating, practical. YOU ALSO GET A MODERN PROFESSIONAL ALL-WAVE, ALL-PURPOSE SET SERVICING INSTRUMENT to help you make money fixing Radios while learning and equip you for full time work after you graduate.

Find Out What Radio, Television Offer You — Mail Coupon

Act Today! Mail the coupon for my 64-page book, "Rich Rewards in Radio." It points out Radio's spare time and full time opportunities and those coming in Television; tells about my Course in Radio and Television; shows more than 100 letters from men I have trained, telling what they are doing and earning. Read my money back agreement. MAIL COUPON in an envelope or paste on a penny postcard—NOW!

J. E. Smith, President, Dept. 1C09
National Radio Institute, Washington, D. C.

Mail this to get 64 page book FREE

THIS BOOK has shown hundreds how to MAKE MORE MONEY

J. E. Smith, President, Dept 1C09
National Radio Institute, Washington, D. C.

Mail me FREE, *without obligation*, your 64-page book "Rich Rewards in Radio." (No salesman will call. Write plainly.)

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FALSE TEETH

$6.85 to $35.00

—BY MAIL—

SEND NO MONEY

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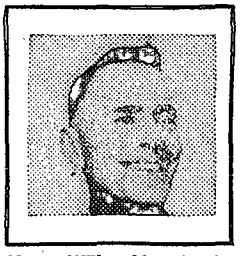
THE TESTIMONIAL LETTERS WE PUBLISH are communications that customers have sent to us without solicitation and without pay. We have large numbers of such missives. We never print anyone's letter without previous consent. We believe that each of our customers who has written to us enthusiastically indorsing our dental plates is sincere. We do not, however, intimate or represent that you will receive the same results in any instance that those customers describe. What is important to you is that when you pay for our teeth, WE GUARANTEE IF YOU ARE NOT 100% SATISFIED IN EVERY RESPECT WITH THE TEETH WE WILL MAKE FOR YOU, AFTER YOU HAVE WORN THEM AS LONG AS 60 DAYS, WE WILL GLADLY REFUND TO YOU EVERY CENT YOU HAVE PAID US FOR THEM.

BEFORE **AFTER**

Mrs. Elsie Boland of Norton, Kansas, writes:

"Enclosed find two pictures. One shows how I looked before I got my teeth; the other one afterwards. Your teeth are certainly beautiful. I have not had mine out since the day I got them, except to clean them."



Harry Willoughby, Adairville, Kentucky, writes:

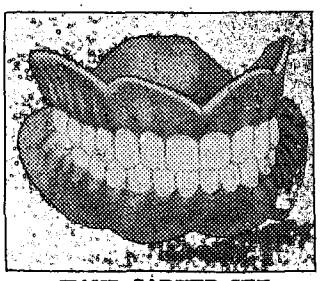
"I have received my teeth and am PROUD OF THEM."

Mrs. Geo. G. Conklin, Bridgeport, Connecticut, writes:

"I received my set of teeth. I wear them day and night. I have good reason to be well pleased with them. Thank you very much."

MADE-TO-MEASURE DENTAL PLATES DIRECT FROM OUR LABORATORY TO YOU!

We make to measure for you **individually**—BY MAIL—Dental Plates for men and women—from an impression of your own mouth taken by you at your home. We have **thousands of customers** all over the country wearing teeth we made by mail at sensible prices.



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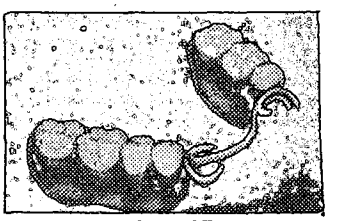
AT ROCK-BOTTOM PRICES

If you find out what others have paid for theirs, you will be astounded when you **see how little ours will cost you!** By reading our catalog, you will learn how to **save half or more on dental plates for yourself.** Monthly payments possible.



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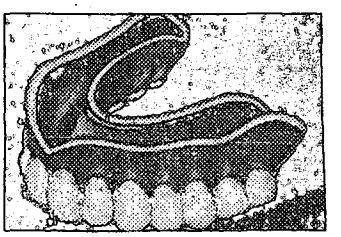
ON 60 DAYS' TRIAL

Make us prove every word we say. Wear our teeth on trial for as long as 60 days. Then, if you are not **perfectly satisfied** with them, they will not cost you a cent.

WITH MONEY-BACK GUARANTEE OF SATISFACTION

We take this risk. We guarantee that if you are not **completely satisfied** with the teeth we make for you, then any time within 60 days we will immediately refund every cent you have paid us for them. **We take your word.** You are the judge.



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TRY our practically unbreakable ROOFLESS, PARTIAL and TRANSLUCENT plates. Our dentures are set with **pearly-white, genuine, porcelain teeth;** constructed from **high-grade materials,** with **expert workmanship,** to give **long service.** We make **all styles** of plates. **A dentist who has had many years' experience** in making **dental plates supervises the making of each plate.** . . .

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Why Trained Accountants Command High Salaries

—and how ambitious men are qualifying by the La Salle Problem Method

GET this straight.

By "accountancy" we do not mean "bookkeeping." For accountancy begins where bookkeeping leaves off.

The skilled accountant takes the figures handed him by the bookkeeper, and *analyzes* and *interprets* them.

He knows how much the costs in the various departments should amount to, how they may be lowered.

He knows what profits should be expected from a given enterprise, how they may be increased.

He knows, in a given business, what per cent of one's working capital can safely be tied up in merchandise on hand, what per cent is safe and adequate for sales promotion. And these, by the way, are but two of *scores* of percentage-figures wherewith he points the way to successful operation.

He knows the intricacies of government taxation.

He knows how to *survey* the transactions of a business over a given period; how to show in cold, hard figures the progress it has made and where it is going. He knows how to *use* these findings as a basis for constructive policies.

In short, the trained accountant is the *controlling engineer* of business—one man business cannot do without.

Small wonder that he commands a salary two to ten times as great as that of the bookkeeper. Indeed, as an independent operator (head of his own accounting firm) he may earn as much as the president of the big and influential bank in his community, or the operating manager of a great railroad.

Some Examples

Small wonder that accountancy offers the trained man such fine opportunities—opportunities well illustrated by the success of thousands of LaSalle accountancy students.* For example—one man was a plumber, 32 years old, with only an eleventh grade education. Today he is auditor for a large bank and his income is 325 per cent larger.

Another was a drug clerk at $30 a week. Now he heads his own very successful accounting firm with an income many times as large.

A woman bookkeeper—buried in details of a small job—is now auditor of an apartment hotel, and her salary mounted in proportion to her work.

A credit manager—earning $200 a month—moved up quickly to $3000, to $5000, and then to a highly profitable accounting business of his own which nets him better than $10,000 a year.

And What It Means to You

Why let the other fellow walk away with the better job, when right in your own home you can equip yourself for a splendid future in this profitable profession?

Are you really *determined* to get ahead? If so, you can start at once to acquire—by the LaSalle Problem Method—a thorough understanding of Higher Accountancy, master its fundamental principles, become expert in the practical application of those principles—this without losing an hour from work or a dollar of pay.

Preliminary knowledge of bookkeeping is unnecessary. You will be given whatever training, instruction or review on the subject of bookkeeping you may personally need—and without any extra expense to you.

If you are dissatisfied with your present equipment—if you recognize the opportunities that lie ahead of you through home-study training — you will do well to send at once for full particulars. The coupon will bring them to you without any obligation, also details of LaSalle's convenient payment plan.

Check, sign and mail the coupon NOW.

LaSalle Extension University
DEPT. 3329-HR CHICAGO

Opportunities in Accountancy—Check below and we will send you a copy of "Accountancy, the Profession that Pays," without obligation.

☐ **Higher Accountancy:**

Other LaSalle Opportunities: If more interested in one of the other fields of business indicated below, check here:

- ☐ Business Management
- ☐ Modern Salesmanship
- ☐ Traffic Management
- ☐ Law: Degree of LL. B.
- ☐ Commercial Law
- ☐ Industrial Management
- ☐ Business Correspondence
- ☐ Credit and Collection Correspondence
- ☐ Modern Foremanship
- ☐ Personnel Management
- ☐ Expert Bookkeeping
- ☐ C. P. A. Coaching
- ☐ Business English
- ☐ Stenotypy
- ☐ Effective Speaking
- ☐ Railway Accounting

Name .....

Present Position .....

Address .....

*Names available on request.

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FOR THE ENTIRE FAMILY

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For Natural or Ordinary Accidental Death

$2,844.00
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(The above figures represent the amount of insurance provided by the policy on a typical average family of five persons)

Insures Men, Women, Children—Ages 1-75

If aching hearts and unbearable grief were all that accompanied death . . . the burden would still be great. But added to that grief and despair are the huge expenses that always follow the footsteps of tragedy. You'll need ready cash to see you through, and unless you carry insurance on each member of your family, some time you're going to have to face these financial burdens.

Computed on Legal Reserve Basis

The **Guarantee Reserve** Policy is brand new . . . it is actuarily sound . . . figured out by leading insurance experts without using the many misleading or confusing "trick clauses" and "hidden phrases" that are contained in so many low cost policies. Seeing is believing . . . that's why we want you to see the policy before you decide to keep it. We want to prove that this is the Policy you should have for your family's protection.

Parents, Children (Married or Unmarried), Brothers, Sisters, Grandparents, In-Laws, Included

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Selling by mail saves agents' commissions, branch offices, expenses, collection expenses . . . that's why from 2 to 6 members of your family, including relatives, may be included in your **Guarantee Reserve** Family Policy for a total cost of only $1.00 a month. You be the judge . . . decide for yourself without agents to high pressure you . . . without embarrassment or obligation.

Send the coupon below for details of this sound insurance offer made by the reliable **Guarantee Reserve** Life Insurance Company. Don't delay . . . do it now, while you and your family are in good health.

QUESTIONS YOU WILL WANT ANSWERED!

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   A. No. The policy remains in effect, insuring the balance of the insured family, as long as premiums are paid.
2. **Q.** *How are premiums paid?*
   A. Pay your $1.00 premium monthly. You will receive a receipt and premium notice each month. NO collectors will ever call on or bother you.
3. **Q.** *In what States are policies issued by Guarantee Reserve Life Insurance Company?*
   A. **Guarantee Reserve** Life Insurance Company is legally entitled to do business by mail in every State in the Union. It is incorporated under Indiana insurance laws.
4. **Q.** *Is a Medical Examination required?*
   A. No. But any members of your family who are not in good health cannot be insured.

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SEND NO MONEY

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Guarantee Reserve Bldg., Dept. 17-C
Indianapolis, Indiana

( ) Please send me your FREE 10-DAY INSPECTION OFFER

NAME.....

ST. OR R.F.D.....

CITY & STATE .....

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THOUSANDS NOW PLAY WHO NEVER THOUGHT THEY COULD

Read this typical letter from one of our students

YES, just like thousands of others, who thought music was hard, this man got the surprise of his life when he tried this easy way to learn music at home. And no wonder! Instead of months of tedious study and practice, he found himself actually playing real tunes in the very first few weeks!

But read this unsolicited letter for yourself:

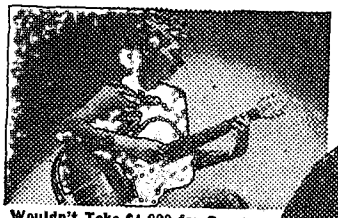
"I didn't even dream that I could actually learn to play without a teacher, because I had always heard that it couldn't be done. I couldn't afford a teacher so I didn't think it would do me any harm to take your course.

"When I received the lessons I took the instantaneous note finder and struck the notes right off. You can imagine my surprise when after three or four weeks I found that I could actually play real tunes.

"Now, when I play for people they will hardly believe that I learned to play so well with just a correspondence course in so short a time. I am getting to the point where even the hardest music holds no terrors for me."

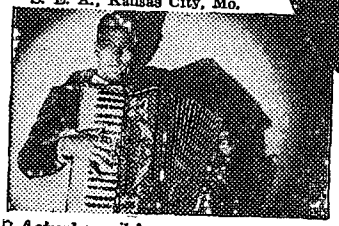
(Signed) *H. C. S., *Calif.*

FREE PROOF it's fun to learn the U. S. School Way ... and it costs less than 7c A DAY



Wouldn't Take $1,000 for Course
The lessons are so simple that anyone can understand them. I have learned to play by note in a little more than a month. I wouldn't take a *thousand* dollars for my course.
*S. E. A., Kansas City, Mo.

Plays on Radio
I am happy to tell you that for four weeks I have been on the air over our local radio stations. So thanks to your institution for such a wonderful course.
*W. H. S., Alabama.



Easy to Understand
The manner in which the various lessons are explained is very helpful as well as interesting. It makes one feel that the explanation is being given in person.
*W. W., Florida.

* *Actual pupils' names on request. Pictures posed by Professional models.*

Here's the best news of all! By this easy, modern *method*, you can now learn to play your favorite instrument, right at home, in your spare time, for less than SEVEN CENTS A DAY! And that covers *everything*, including valuable sheet music. No extras of any kind. What's more, it doesn't take years to learn this way. You learn to play in much LESS time than you probably ever dreamed possible.

It's easy as A-B-C. It's FUN! You learn to play by *playing*. If interested, send at once for the Free Print and Picture Sample that shows HOW and the handsome illustrated booklet that gives complete information. Just mail the coupon. (Instruments supplied when needed, cash or credit.) **U. S. SCHOOL of MUSIC, 2943 Brunswick Bldg., New York, N. Y.**

FREE PRINT & PICTURE SAMPLE

U. S. School of Music, 2943 Brunswick Bldg., N. Y. C.

I am interested in music study, particularly in the instrument indicated below. Please send me your free illustrated booklet, "How to Learn Music at Home," and your illustrated Print and Picture Sample.

(Do you have instrument? .....)

Piano	Mandolin	Trombone	Piano Accordion
Violin	Saxophone	Banjo	Plain Accordion
Guitar	Clarinet	Ukulele	Hawaiian Guitar
Cello	Trumpet	Cornet	Other Instrument

Name .....

Street .....

City ..... State.....

☐ Check here if under 16 years of age.

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BLEEDING GUMS PYORRHEA TRENCH MOUTH

Don't wait until it's too late and lose your teeth. PYRO which has astounded the medical profession. PYRO gets right at the trouble and kills the poisonous germs. One reason why PYRO works so efficaciously is because it actually penetrates the gums, thereby killing the germs inside and out. Remember pyorrhea and trench mouth. If unattended, permits the infection to spread quickly, and before you know it, teeth are rotted and bone construction is destroyed and teeth fall out.

PYRO SAVES YOUR TEETH or *NO COST!*

You can believe the sworn affidavits of doctors and dentists who have tried this new discovery on most stubborn cases of pyorrhea, trench mouth and bleeding gums.

PYRO was used with startling success many times, in cases that seemed hopeless . . . where everything else failed. PYRO is almost uncanny in getting quick and sure results. It gets to the root of the trouble because PYRO has a penetration of ¼ inch in 5 minutes and it corrects and heals as it penetrates the diseased areas. If your gums are sore or bleed when brushed. . . . If your teeth are loose or pus pockets have formed, order PYRO today for quick correction . . . act now before you lose your teeth entirely.

A DOCTOR WRITES:—

A well-known physician . . . a member of the American Medical Assn., and many other professional organizations, says: "I do not hesitate to state that this solution has saved me from the nightmare of false teeth."

Pyorrhetic Teeth

Too Late!

Read This Proof!

Mrs. W. H. Kirby, 45 East 60th Street, New York, writes: "For a number of years I suffered with an advanced case of pyorrhea; constant treatments seemed only to arrest the disease. I was told I would lose my teeth. Then I heard of this new remedy. Being desperate, decided to try it. Am very happy now. My gums are healthy, teeth tight, and write this hoping that others suffering as I, will try it."

Don't Lose Your Teeth Order *Now!*

We have 45 pages of affidavits attesting to the wonderful powers of PYRO. So positive are we that it will bring you the health and happiness you have been seeking, that we will send it to you without a single penny of risk. Send $2 today for the full home treatment or we will send C.O.D. for $2 plus postage. Use PYRO as directed and if not 100% delighted with results, return the unused bottle and we will refund the purchase price in full.

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Dept. 1703—501 W. 139th St.,
New York, N. Y.

Send me your regular size bottle of PYRO and simple instructions for home use.

☐ Send C.O.D. I will pay postman $2.00 plus postage.

☐ Enclosed find $2.00 in full payment. I will return empty bottle and you will refund my money if I am not satisfied.

Name.....

Street.....

City.....State.....

Canadian orders $2.25, cash with order.

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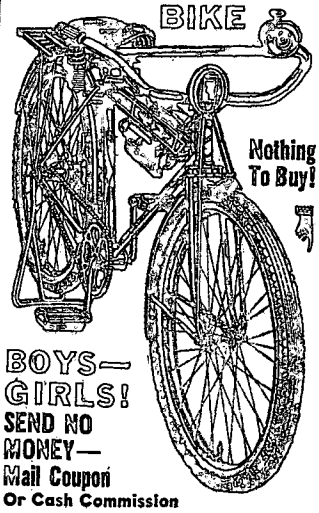
GIVEN BIKE

OUR 46th Yr.



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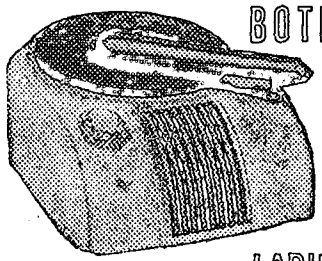
BOYS—GIRLS!
SEND NO MONEY—
Mail Coupon
Or Cash Commission

Fully equipped—Balloon tires and all. SIMPLY GIVE AWAY FREE colored Art Pictures with our well known White CLOVERINE Brand SALVE, used for chaps, mild burns, shallow cuts. Salve easly sold to friends at 25c a box (with picture FREE). Remit and select premium as per catalog. SPECIAL: Choice of 35 premiums given for returning only $3 collected. We furnish tested list of most likely customers. Nothing to buy! New picture helps sales. Act Now! Write or Mail Coupon! Salve and pictures sent postage paid by us.

WILSON CHEM. CO., INC.
Dept. 31-A TYRONE, PA.

BOTH GIVEN

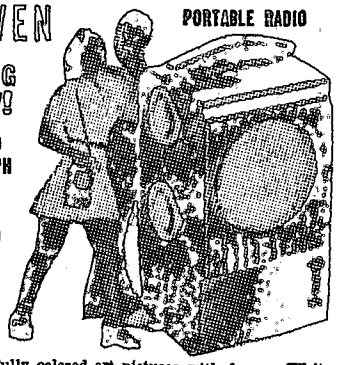


NOTHING TO BUY!

RADIO PHONOGRAPH

MAIL Coupon

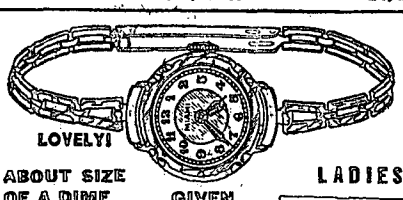
PORTABLE RADIO



GIVEN SEND NO MONEY **LADIES! BOYS! GIRLS!**

Choice of cash commission. Combination Phonograph with self-starting motor, plays 12-in. records, good radio reception, or Portable Dry Cell Radio with four miniature tubes and dynamic speaker, ready to play. Get the news! Simply give away FREE beautifully colored art pictures with famous White Cloverine Brand Salve used for chaps, surface burns. Salve easily sold at 25c a box (with FREE Picture). Remit and select premium, or keep cash commission per catalog. Other Radios Given. SPECIAL: Choice of 35 premiums given for returning only $3 collected. 46th yr. Square plan. Nothing to buy. New patriotic flag pictures included. Be first. Write or mail coupon now.

WILSON CHEM. CO., INC. Dept. 31-B Tyrone, Pa.



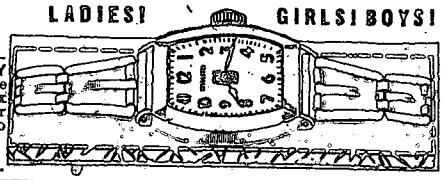
LOVELY!

ABOUT SIZE OF A DIME GIVEN

BOTH GIVEN

Nothing to Buy—
Send No Money
MAIL COUPON

LADIES! GIRLS! BOYS!



Valuable watches, other premiums or liberal cash commission GIVEN—SIMPLY GIVE AWAY FREE pictures with White CLOVERINE Brand SALVE at 25c a box (with FREE picture) and remit as per catalog. 46th year. Be first. Nothing to buy! Write or mail coupon NOW!

WILSON CHEM. CO., INC.,
Dept. 31-C Tyrone, Pa.

GIVEN

NOTHING TO BUY!

Send No Money

BOYS

Mail Coupon!

Iver Johnson Bolt Action 22 Cal. Self-Cocking Safety RIFLE—32" long STURDY! THIS Rifle, Cash, or, choice of other valuable premiums given—SIMPLY GIVE AWAY FREE beautifully colored Pictures with White CLOVERINE Brand SALVE used for chaps, mild burns, shallow cuts. Salve easily sold to friends at 25c a box (with picture FREE). Remit and select premium per catalog. 46th year. Nothing to buy. Be first! Write for Salve and pictures or Mail Coupon.

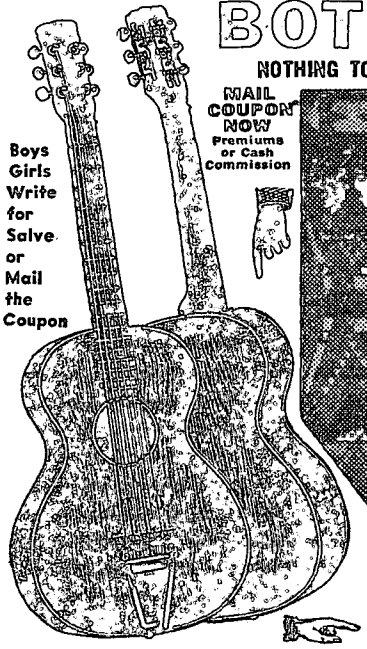
WILSON CHEM. CO., INC., Dept. 31-D, TYRONE, PA.

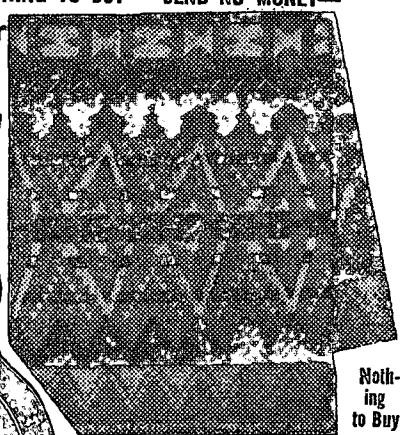
BOTH GIVEN

NOTHING TO BUY — SEND NO MONEY—

MAIL COUPON NOW
Premiums or Cash Commission

Boys Girls Write for Salve or Mail the Coupon



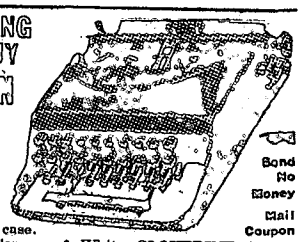


Nothing to Buy

Standard guitar, Indian blankets, other musical instruments, other blankets, other premiums or cash GIVEN—JUST give away free pictures with White CLOVERINE Brand SALVE for chaps and mild burns, easily sold to friends at 25c a box (with FREE picture) and remit per catalog. Nothing to buy. Write or mail coupon now!

WILSON CHEM. CO., Inc., Dept. 31-F, Tyrone, Pa.

NOTHING TO BUY GIVEN or CASH



Send No Money Mail Coupon

Real portable typewriters, with carrying case.

JUST dispose of White CLOVERINE Brand SALVE at 25c a box (with FREE picture) and remit per catalog. Be first. Nothing to buy. Write or Mail coupon. WILSON CHEM. CO., INC., Dept. 31-E, Tyrone, Pa.

MAIL COUPON

Wilson Chem. Co., Inc., Tyrone, Pa.
Dept. TG-31—3-41, Date.....

Gentlemen: Please send me 12 beautiful art pictures with 12 boxes WHITE CLOVERINE Brand SALVE to sell at 25c a box (giving popular picture FREE). I will remit within 30 days, select a premium or keep cash commission as per catalog sent with order, postage paid.

NAME .....

RD. or
BOX No. .....ST.....

TOWN ..... STATE.....

Print Your Last Name Only In Spaces Below:

WRITE, or PASTE COUPON ON A POSTAL or MAIL COUPON in an envelope NOW! Which premium do you like best?

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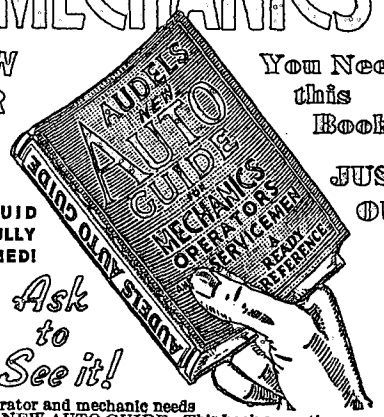
MECHANICS

KNOW YOUR CAR

You Need this Book

JUST OUT!

NEW FLUID DRIVE FULLY EXPLAINED!



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Please send me postpaid AUDELS NEW AUTOMOBILE GUIDE ($4) for free examination. If I decide to keep it, I will send you $1 within 7 days; then remit $1 monthly until purchase price of $4 is paid. Otherwise, I will return it to you promptly.

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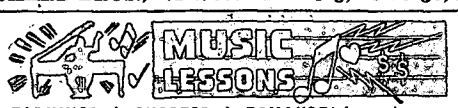
WANTED ORIGINAL SONG POEMS

any subject, for immediate consideration. Don't delay—send your poem at once to

RICHARD BROS., 74 Woods Building, Chicago, Ill.



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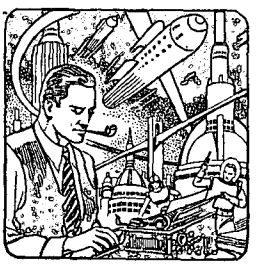
NATIONAL ACADEMY OF MUSIC

Lemon Juice Recipe Checks Rheumatic Pain Quickly

If you suffer from rheumatic or neuritis pain, try this simple inexpensive home recipe. Get a package of Ru-Ex Compound, a two week's supply, mix it with a quart of water, add the juice of 4 lemons. Often within 48 hours—sometimes overnight—splendid results are obtained. If the pains do not quickly leave you, return the empty package and Ru-Ex will cost you nothing to try. It is sold under an absolute money-back guarantee. Ru-Ex Compound is for sale by drug stores everywhere.

THE STORY BEHIND THE STORY



THE Solar System is composed of at least nine planets. That's an astronomical fact that will remain true until a day when new, super-telescopes may reveal otherwise.

The nine planetary bodies that whirl about the Sun symbolize our System—a System of which Earth is a member. But will the nine circling spheres that girdle the solar orb eternally stand for Sol's trademark?

Science tells us that nothing is perpetual—except change. And change may some day, far in the future, bring about a new solar order. New planets may be trapped in the Sun's orbit. Or several of our nine worlds may be lost to some greater celestial body, darting through our System.

Suppose some cosmic catastrophe upsets the scale of things and de-systematizes the Solar System? What will be the fate of Earth in the new planetary order?

Cosmic Quest

Barry Cord thinks he has the answer in his powerful novel of cosmic quest, THE LOST PLANET. And here's what he has to say concerning the origin of his story, featured in this issue:

THE LOST PLANET is the first piece of science fiction I've ever submitted to an editor. Though, as an early fan I've often jotted down ideas and impressions that came to me through my readings.

But strangely, the idea for this story came to me, literally, from the stars. I had gone up into the White Mountains with my brother and a friend, for a week's vacation. We camped, that second night, just off a lonely goat trail that angled over a hogback, and which my brother had insisted on taking.

We sat around a dying campfire, our conversation centering mainly on hunting and fishing, and far removed from science fiction. Then my companions turned in, bedded down under the mosquito netting. I stood up a while longer, smoking.

The summer sky was star-splashed that night, and from the ridge the blazing lights seemed low, beckoning with *mysterious* insistence. And as I watched a meteor burst into fiery view overhead, and arced in reddish streak to the eastern horizon. It was the longest "star fall" I had ever seen, and with its fading my thoughts shifted to that star-hung void that is our Universe.

Man's destiny, his eternal quest, has always fascinated me. What if (I thought) some catastrophe should force Man into space in

(Concluded on page 129)

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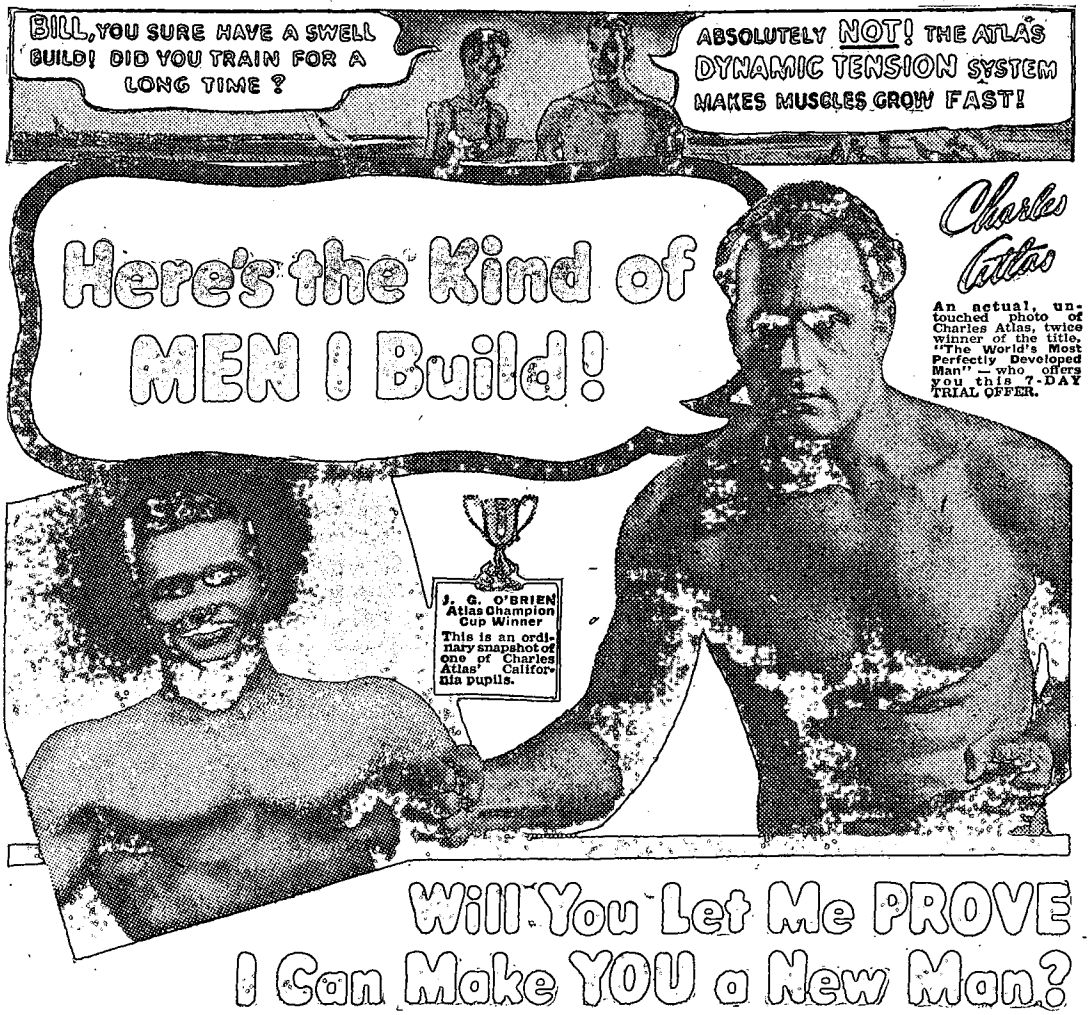
BILL, YOU SURE HAVE A SWELL BUILD! DID YOU TRAIN FOR A LONG TIME?
ABSOLUTELY NOT! THE ATLAS DYNAMIC TENSION SYSTEM MAKES MUSCLES GROW FAST!
Here's the Kind of MEN I Build!
Charles Atlas
An actual, untouched photo of Charles Atlas, twice winner of the title, "The World's Most Perfectly Developed Man" — who offers you this 7-DAY TRIAL OFFER.
J. G. O'BRIEN Atlas Champion Cup Winner
This is an ordinary snapshot of one of Charles Atlas' California pupils.

Will You Let Me PROVE I Can Make YOU a New Man?

MEN—Meet J. G. O'Brien, of California, one of my Silver Cup Winners! Look at that strong neck—those broad, handsome, perfectly proportioned shoulders—that muscled chest and stomach. Read what he says: "Look at me NOW! 'Dynamic Tension' WORKS! I'm proud of the natural, easy way you have made me an 'Atlas Champion'!"—*J. G. O'Brien.*

I myself, was once a skinny weakling of 97 lbs. I didn't know what real health and strength were. I was afraid to fight, ashamed to be seen in a swimming suit.

Then I discovered the secret that changed me into "The World's Most Perfectly Developed Man," the title I won and have held *ever since.* My secret is "Dynamic Tension." It is a *natural* method. Its purpose is not only to give you the powerful, rippling muscles you'd like to see in your own mirror, but also—for those whose systems are sluggish from lack of proper exercise—to help them tone up their entire body, inside and out.

Accept My 7-Day Trial Offer

Do you want a better build? Are you dissatisfied with your present physical development? All I ask is a 7-DAY TRIAL. Just one week! In even that short time you will notice your chest hardening and filling out with solid muscle—or the 7-Day Trial will cost you nothing. Surely this is proof enough that by continuing with my "Dynamic Tension" method I will make you a New Man—give you bodily power and drive, and put you in magnificent physical condition which wins you the envy and respect of everyone.

FREE BOOK

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Let me show you the results produced for other men! I'll send you FREE my famous book, "Everlasting Health and Strength." It shows actual photos. Write your name and address carefully on coupon. Mail to me personally today. I'll rush your free copy to you AT ONCE! Charles Atlas, Dept. 77C, 115 East 23rd St., New York, N. Y.

CHARLES ATLAS
Dept. 77C, 115 East 23rd Street, New York, N. Y.

I want the proof that your system of "Dynamic Tension" will help make me a New Man—give me a healthy, husky body and big muscle development. Send me your FREE book, "Everlasting Health and Strength" and full details about your 7-DAY trial offer.

Name .....
(Please print or write plainly)

Address .....

City ..... State .....

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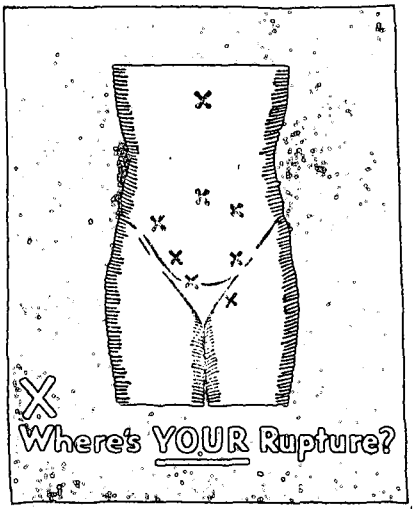
don't Worry about Rupture



○ Why put up with days . . . months . . . YEARS of discomfort, worry and fear? Learn now about this perfected invention for all forms of reducible rupture. Surely you keenly desire—you eagerly CRAVE to enjoy life's normal activities and pleasures once again. To work . . . to play . . . to live . . . to love . . . with the haunting Fear of Rupture banished from your thoughts! Literally *thousands* of rupture sufferers *have* entered this *Kingdom of Paradise Regained.* Why not you? Some wise man said, "Nothing is impossible in this world"—and it is true, for where others fail is where we have had our greatest success in many cases! Even doctors—thousands of them—have ordered for themselves and their patients. Unless your case is absolutely hopeless, *do not despair.* The coupon below brings our Free Rupture Book in plain envelope. Send the coupon now.

Patented AIR-CUSHION Support Gives Nature a Chance to CLOSE the OPENING

Think of it! Here's a surprising yet simple-acting invention that permits Nature to close the opening—that holds the rupture securely but gently, day and night, at work and at play! Thousands of grateful letters express heartfelt thanks for results beyond the expectation of the writers. What is this invention—How does it work? Will it help me? Get the complete, fascinating facts on the Brooks Automatic Air Cushion Appliance—send now for *free* Rupture Book.

Cheap—Sanitary—Comfortable

Rich or poor—ANYONE can afford to buy this remarkable, LOW-PRICED rupture invention! But look out for imitations and counterfeits. The Genuine Brooks Air-Cushion Truss is never sold in stores or by agents. Your Brooks is made up, after your order is received, to fit your particular case. You buy direct at the low "maker-to-user" price. The perfected Brooks is sanitary, lightweight, inconspicuous. Has no hard pads to gouge painfully into the flesh, no stiff, punishing springs, no metal girdle to rust or corrode. It brings heavenly comfort and security—while the Automatic Air Cushion continually works, in its own, unique way, *to help Nature get results!* Learn what this patented invention can mean to you—send coupon quick!

PROOF!

Read These Reports on Reducible Rupture Cases.

(In our files at Marshall, Michigan we have over 33,000 grateful letters . . . which have come to us entirely unsolicited and without any sort of payment.)

Likes Brooks Best

"I bought one of your Rupture Appliances in 1933, wore it day and night for one year and laid it aside last December. The rupture hasn't bothered me since. I used several others without success until I got a Brooks."—J. B. McCarter, Route 2, Box 104, Oregon City, Ore.

"Runs and Plays"

"My son has not worn the Appliance for over a year. He wore one for ten years and I am very grateful now to think he has laid it aside. He is twelve years old, runs and plays hard like all boys and is never bothered about the rupture."—Mrs. M. George, Route 1, Box 103, Cumberland, Md.

C. E. BROOKS, *Inventor*

SENT ON TRIAL!

No . . . don't order a Brooks now—FIRST get the complete revealing explanation of this world-famous rupture invention! THEN decide whether you want the comfort—the freedom from fear and worry—the security—the same amazing results thousands of men, women and children have reported. They found our invention the answer to their prayers! Why can't you? And you risk nothing as the complete appliance is SENT ON TRIAL. Surely you owe it to yourself to investigate this no-risk trial. Send for the facts now—today—hurry! All correspondence strictly confidential.

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480-W State St., Marshall, Mich.

Without obligation, please send your FREE Book on Rupture, Proof of Results, and TRIAL OFFER—all in plain envelope.

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State whether for Man ☐ *Woman* ☐ *or Child* ☐

FREE! Latest Rupture Book Explains All!

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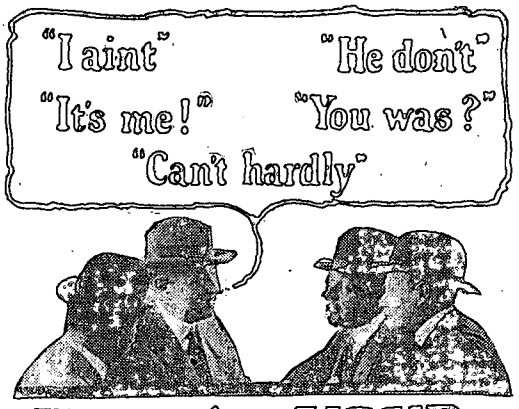

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Starl of the M-GE-3

CHAPTER I

Trapped

THE space ship poised high above the ringed planet, its beryllium hull a faint glinting speck in the cold darkness of space. A strange visitor to this end of the Galaxy, far from its home star, Rigel, the vessel carried its identification in gleaming letters on the forepart of the long hull. M-GE-3. Third ship of the Galactic Explorers from the planet Merika.

Starl, youngest of the three explorers aboard the ship, turned a square-jawed, keen-eyed face from the window of the observation room.

"An unusual sight, these rings, Sive," he said to the gaunt, austere man at the control board. "In the entire annals of the GE there is no mention of a ringed planet. I wonder—"

He went thoughtfully silent, his eager gaze studying the majestic spectacle of a planet girdled by huge, spinning rings. In all his cosmic advertising he had never seen such a magnificent sight.

Sive, oldest of the trio, and captain of the GE-3, let a smile play along his lips. Long years in the Service had sapped the enthusiasm from his gaunt frame, taken the zest from his blue eyes. The endless reaches of space bred a cold severity in those who had been long with the GE. So it was with Sive, fifty years a master of one of the finest space ships of the line. And with Morry, his computer and head assistant.

Morry was a dour, long-legged man with a fringe of gray hair around his ears and a cynical bent to his nature. He did his work in a methodical manner, made out his reports, and cared little for incidental adventuring.

The trio had been engaged for several months charting conditions of the red star, Antares, and were due back at Nu Cago, capital of the world system of Merika, to report to Borgot, of the Institute. Morry was anxious to get back.

He glanced up from his charts, frowning at Starl.

"Don't try to talk Sive into another of your foolish adventurings," he rasped, captiously. "Already we've tarried too long. Even with the Mav space-warpers it'll take us two weeks to get back to Merika. And Borgot is expecting us—"

STARL swung on the dour-faced computer, his blue eyes chilling.

"Trouble with you, Morry," he snapped coldly, "you've lost the sap of life. You've dried out, sitting there at that desk. The Universe is just a vast space field, and your job is to chart it for the Institute. Hell! What's become of the spirit of the GE? Is this the tradition handed down through fifty thousand years?"

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He turned to face Sive, who was watching, a thin smile lingering in his old eyes.

"Sive, I worked like the devil to win a post on GE. It's been my ambition since I was old enough to read the Annals. I begged to take Rednor's place on the GE-3 when he retired from active service. Because I wanted to work with you. I read your early reports, of the days before the Mav space-warpers—when flights were made in terms of millions of miles instead of parsecs. The man who made out *those* reports wouldn't have hesitated a moment to set his ship down on that ringed planet—"

"Aye," Sive interrupted. His eyes had grown serious. "I was younger then, like yourself. And reckless.

Sive

But I paid for that recklessness. I lost Wardi, the best navigator ever to come out of the Institute on that hell planet of Ur. I lost Myers in the cauldron holes of Larisus. Fifty years have taught me the wisdom of obeying orders from the Institute. And our orders were to make certain observations of Antares, and report back within five months, Merikan time. I'll have to obey orders, Starl. I'm sorry, but that's the way it is."

THE young explorer flung up a hand in swift gesture.

"But don't you see, Sive? This may be the answer to the riddle of our race. That which the GE has sought since its inception. I know." He shrugged, reading correctly the smile in the old space navigator's eyes. "I've been reading perhaps too much among the ancient archives. But I know that our three-hundred-thousand-year evolution on Merika, fourth planet of Rigel, was not the beginning of our race. I know that our forbears came from some lost planet they called Earth. That they were driven forth by the Catastrophe of 2053, when a cosmic cloud dimmed the Sun and brought the ice creeping down over the planet.

"It's all there, in the ancient records. How a party escaped into space in the Ordson Ark, powered by the lost discovery of that half-mad scientist, Ordson himself. The Ordson Vibrator it was called, and it must have worked somewhat along the principle of the Mav space-warpers."

Starl's eyes were glowing, his lean, hard body fired by that ancient epic of a people fleeing into the Great Unknown.

"Think of it, Sive!" he cried. "At a time when the interplanetary journey between Earth and its ancient satellite, the Moon, was an awe-inspiring achievement. Ordson built the Ordson Ark that dropped that party of desperate refugees an unknown number of parsecs through space. They landed, finally, on what is now Merika, which is merely a shortened sound for their ancient homeland—America. Though Ordson had built the Vibrator, he himself never fully understood the strange forces which warped space itself about them, and because of this their landing on Merika resulted in the death of Ordson and half that hardy company. And lost to us the secret of Ordson's strange power—"

"Aye," Morry grunted, coldly. "We, too, have read among the ancient records. And I, for one, share the view of the historian, Vergal, that they are fanciful fabrications of the Old Ones. Legends of our race—tales written down in strange forms called books. Myths and legends that were discredited by most intelligent men, after the Second Advancement. That

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ancient tale of flight from some lost planet is nothing but a myth."

"Perhaps," Starl muttered. "But I have read long among the ancient archives. And I believe in them. There is evidence, biologic and anthropological, that indicates we did not arise out of Merika. Three hundred thousand sun cycles have adapted our race to the planet. But Zelus, of the Congor Observatory, has recorded evidence that substantiates the ancient records.

"Somewhere in this vast Galaxy spins our true homeland—lost amidst these myriads of stars. Yet the old records speak of a ringed planet in the old System, Sive, a planet called Saturn. Perhaps this ringed planet will give us some answer to the ancient riddle."

MORRY sneered, cynical of his companion's conjecture. But Sive remained grave-faced, serious. He glanced out the steelex windows, and in his mind he was calculating, coldly, the chances of this small system being the mythical home of his race.

For it was a small system. Three planets circled the blazing sun. The innermost, a whirling, cloudy globe about twice the size of Merika. Then there was the ringed planet Starl was now surveying, somewhat smaller than Merika. And last, a dull red disc from their position in space, a giant planet far out on the rim of the system.

"The archives speak of the old Solar System as having nine planets, Starl!" he reminded. "And ancient Earth had no rings—"

"But this planet has life!" Starl persisted. "An atmosphere not unlike our own. And the green growths! We have seen them through the electroscope. *Green*, Sive! That alone is worth our investigation. Our own vegetation, on Merika, is bluish. Only the ancient records speak of a land of green growths—"

"I vote no!" Morry rasped. "Borgot is expecting us, Sive. Shall we risk the displeasure of the Board to follow a youngster's whim?"

Sive considered. Two weeks would find them dropping down onto the vast space field at Nu Cago. For a moment the old navigator's mind lingered on the towering structures ringing the field, on the wide-sweeping crimson beacon that would whip back and forth across the sky, heralding the return of one of the Galactic Fleet.

Borgot would be waiting, high up in his office at the Institute, waiting for their report. . . .

He shrugged, his gaze holding on Starl's eager face. Starl was a romantic, a dreamer. Yet something stirred in Sive, like the awakening of his own youth. He had been much like Starl, then.

He sighed reminiscently.

"It'll do no harm, Morry," he decided, his thin lips lengthening in a smile. "We'll land on this ringed planet and make a few observations. Perhaps we'll find something of interest for the Institute."

"Bah!" Morry spat and turned back to his charts.

Starl crossed to the old navigator, laid a hand affectionately on his shoulder.

"Thanks, Sive. I've got a feeling—a strange, uncanny feeling. As though I were coming home, after three hundred thousand years!"

THEY dropped like a silver bullet on the whirling planet, passed under the mighty equatorial rings that girdled the sphere.

Sive threw on the repulsion motors to ease the long hull through the thick blanket of low-hanging clouds below.

Starl was at the steelex windows, his eyes intent on the vaporous mass upon which they were slowly settling. A strange sense of intimacy stirred in him, a feeling he could not shake off. What lay beneath those clouds?

The ship lurched then, violently. Then it dropped, straight down with sickening speed, as if it had suddenly run into an invisible hole in the atmosphere.

Starl was flung back against the control board with shocking force. He rolled, groped his way to his feet. A thin trickle of blood wormed its way from the gash under his left eye.

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"Sive!" he cried. "What's wrong?"

The old navigator's face had gone white and hard. A strange, puzzled look was in his eyes.

Desperately, his fingers worked with the control buttons, braking the plunge.

The vibrations of the mighty repulsion motors shook the long hull. The ship's downward drop was slowed. Then, abruptly, they hit the clouds, and all view outside the steelex windows was blotted out in a swirl of grayish vapor.

Starl crossed to Sive's side, his face grim.

"What's g o n e wrong?" he demanded.

Sive shook his head dazedly.

"Some magnetic force is pulling us down!" he said grimly. "I'm giving her all the power we've got to pull out of it. Enough to have escaped two gravities, Starl. But we're still falling!"

Starl swung his attention to the steelex panels. They had dropped through the clouds, were slowly settling in a deep-walled valley. Below them they had a glimpse of beetling black cliffs, a broad plain, a tangle of green, and a wide river that flowed toward a distant sea.

Sive was still working frantically the controls.

"Use the Mav space-warpers, Sive," Morry snapped behind him. "We've got to get out of here!"

Sive shook his head. "Too dangerous. We've got to be out of the gravity field of this planet before we can use the space-warpers, or—"

They were still falling, gently now, though the repulsion motors were whining with a high, thin scream. The atomic blasts ripped up the earth below them in great steaming rents. Starl gripped at supports by the steelex windows, and waited, his square jaw set, his mouth tight and grim. Behind him he heard Morry's harsh, condemning tone:

"I told you we shouldn't have tried a landing—"

Then the ship hit with a violent, tearing impact that slammed Starl free of his hold, hurled him across the floor.

CHAPTER II

Sinister Planet

STARL shook tawny hair out of his eyes as he rose, groped his way to Sive. The old navigator had cut off the repulsion motors just before they landed. He lay now, limp and still, huddled across the control board.

Gently, Starl lifted the old skipper off the panel. An ugly bruise over Sive's left temple revealed the cause of his limpness. Starl carried him to one of the sidewall couches, laid him down. Morry, unhurt and silent, came forward, bringing water and a tablet of *siestin*, a powerful drug that arrested pain and stimulated consciousness.

Starl dissolved the tablet in water, forced it down Sive's throat. Color flowed back into the old navigator's face, and a few moments later he sat up unaided.

There was a silence in the room then, a cold, guilty silence. Starl looked briefly at Morry, then turned away, sensing the unspoken accusation in his eyes. It *was* his fault, Starl told himself grimly. If only he hadn't insisted—

"Well, we'll try again after a while," Sive said cheerfully. "In the meantime we'll make the best of it. Whoever or whatever is behind the magnetic force that pulled us down might reveal itself. The instruments show that the force is still gripping the ship. I suggest we arm ourselves with the Duo-Lectro guns, and prepare for any eventuality!"

Starl shrugged. He was standing by the observation window, studying the luxurious tangle of giant ferns, vines and other vegetation that began at the edge of the clearing in which the GE-3 had landed.

And, as he surveyed this portion of the clearing, a strange, unaccountable chill gripped the hard-muscled Merikan's being. A forbidding, sinister hush seemed to hang over the clearing, even though the drowsy, sunlit air was placid enough.

And then Starl's observing eyes

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noted a significant fact. Numerous huge, brilliantly winged dragonflies were hovering about the scarlet flowers on the edge of the clearing. But, though they darted constantly about, they never ventured into that hushed, sunlit area!

With an effort, Starl shook off that strange chill, thrust the ominous thoughts out of his mind. He turned to the wall cabinet where Sive and Morry were getting into gun harness. The wide belts carried a brace of Duo-Lectros, the deadliest hand weapons known to Merika. Sive noticed the tightness of Starl's lips as he joined them, and he laid a friendly hand on the younger man's shoulder.

"Forget it, Starl," he said kindly. "This is not of your doing. And we're not beaten yet."

They waited, looking out through the steelex panels, anticipating the unknown. Still the clearing remained quiet. Presently the Sun began to dip in the sky. Occasionally now, strange arms of gray mist drifted up from the steaming lowlands, drawing a veil across the clearing. Sometimes they glimpsed a huge, horny head towering above the fern trees, saw the tangle of green quiver to the passage of a giant, lumbering shape. But none of these huge denizens ventured close to the clearing where the GE-3 lay long and glittering in the waning sun.

"Saurians!" Starl muttered. "Giant reptiles of the type that roamed ancient Earth in the days long before Man. The ancient records, Sive—" His eyes displayed wonder. "Yet this can't be Earth! The rings—the presence of these huge reptiles— No, this can't be Earth!" he repeated.

SIVE'S eyes were cold and thoughtful.

"It is very strange, Starl. For the Old Ones spoke of a time when Earth was young, when the continents were hot and steaming, and the Brainless Ones walked the land. And yet—"

Morry scoffed, skepticism obvious in his eyes.

"Am I to infer, Sive," he said bitingly, "that you believe this to be ancient Earth? Surely, that bump on your head has affected your reasoning. Starl's wild imaginings I can at least understand, if not approve. But you—"

Morry's thin, dour face twisted in a frown.

"Your own ancient records must surely tell you how fantastic is your conclusion," he argued. "We know that ancient Earth had no rings. The ancient Solar System had nine planets —this system has three. Finally, the Reptilian Era of dominance was recorded as having occurred some several hundreds of million years before the Old Ones. That fact alone, unless you utterly ignore the time element, destroys all possibility that this hellish planet can be the ancient homeland mentioned in the records."

Sive nodded, a thin smile touching his lips.

"Your argument is unassailable, Morry. I was indulging in idle fancy. Evolution here is perhaps proceeding on parallel lines with that of ancient Earth, and we have happened upon its Reptilian Era." He shrugged, made a gesture with his hands. "But enough of this speculation. Our problem is to free the GE-3 of this strange force that shackles it to the ground."

HE went back to the control board, his eyes hard.

"Hold on!" he ordered after a moment's thought. "I'm going to try to lift her out of here!"

Starl's strong fingers tightened about the grips by the steelex panels. The mighty repulsion motors kicked into life. The great hull groaned, quivered. The motors lifted to a high, tortured crescendo as Sive, his seamed face set, fed them all the power in the generators.

The GE-3 strained like a crippled eagle trying to lift itself into the air. But the strange force that had dragged it down into this clearing was greater than the repulsion motors. The generators began to smoke, crackle dangerously. Sive had to cut the power before they burned out.

They were silent after that, faces white as the grim realization came home to them that they were hopelessly trapped on this strange planet.

Starl's hard gaze sought the old nav-

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igator's. He read the utter despair that flooded the old space-dog's frame as he sat, shoulders slumped, before the control board. A savage, fighting mood stirred in the explorer's breast.

"Sive—we're not going to give up this easily!" he said spiritedly. "Somewhere out there lies the reason for this—"

Starl stiffened, his lean muscular body pivoting back to the window. A deep sound had rolled across the clearing. It was a great hollow bonging, as of a giant sledge stroke against a huge drum. Out of the very bowels of the earth that sound seemed to issue, deep-toned and imperious with sinister warning.

Starl watched. The huge dragonflies at the edge of the clearing disappeared, like shimmering phantoms, into the tangled jungle green. The sinister hush seemed suddenly to extend beyond the sunlit clearing, to the vegetation bordering it.

"Men, something's up!" Starl cried out.

Then he went still, dimly conscious of the strained, taut attitude of his companions as they edged near him by the steelex observation windows.

For the atmosphere in the clearing was quivering, whirling like some giant vortex. A strange, thin sighing penetrated to the still interior of the space ship. Then, slowly, the turbulent atmosphere stilled—and a shimmering figure began to materialize in the clearing which had been empty a moment before!

CHAPTER III

The Golden Girl

STARL stared. The shimmering, phantasmic form steadied, solidified, finally became a tall, slender, golden-haired girl of such breath-taking beauty it made Starl gasp. Clad in some metal sheath that glinted with a thousand individual golden reflections, she stood eying the three Galactic explorers with wondering gaze.

Her hair was long and soft and golden, reaching well down to her moulded hips. Her eyes were big and purple and alive with some dark, inner flame. A necklace of triangular-shaped, dull blue stones graced a smooth white throat. And in her left hand she held a small, dartlike object which might have been a weapon.

For long moments the three trapped explorers from far-off Merika stared, caught by the strangeness and the beauty of that girl. It was Starl who finally broke the spell. He straightened, his jaw setting in a determined angle.

"I'm going out there, Sive," he said sharply. "Perhaps I can make her understand—"

"Wait, Starl!" Sive said. "It may be a lure, some false projection to draw us out into the clearing. We're safe as long as we stay inside the ship."

But the younger man was already entering the air lock. Sive swung around, addressed the dour-faced computer.

"Man the forward Duo-Lectro battery, Morry," he said gruffly. "We've got to cover the rash young fool."

Starl stepped out, clad only in the soft plastic material of gray that gave to every movement of his muscled figure. Previous tests had ascertained that the atmosphere of this ringed planet was similar to Merika's, with a slightly higher oxygen content.

He swung open the outside port, hesitated a moment, breathing deeply. The fresh air gave him a sudden exhilaration that was almost heady. Ahead of him was a particularly bad stretch, and he jumped to clear it. The sense of lightness he experienced, of super-strength, amazed him, until he remembered that his muscles were molded to Merika's gravity, which was somewhat greater than this smaller planet.

Starl landed fifteen feet away, on flexed legs and slightly off balance. He fell forward on hands and knees, scrambled erect quickly. At his first move the golden-haired girl had retreated, and now the dartlike object in her slim hand was lifted in a startled gesture.

Starl spread his hands in a gesture of peace.

"I'm harmless," he said, grinning, his strong teeth showing white and even

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against his bronzed face. "I just want to talk to you. That is, if you can understand me."

The sound of his voice startled the golden-haired girl. She stared at him, awed wonder plain in her eyes.

"You speak—Aleetian!" she said. Her voice had a musical quality that sent a thrill through Starl. "You are fashioned after the men of Aleetia. We were cruising over your world when a force pulled us down. But we meant no harm. We are friends."

The girl smiled pleasantly. She had a radiant smile that warmed Starl, stirred a quick yearning inside him.

"Seejohn thought you were Moaavites," she explained. "The Moaavites were bad. We beat them off the last time, when they were few. But we

Meet the Author of This Novel

BARRY CORD'S novel in this issue marks another scientifiction "first" for THRILLING WONDER STORIES. THE LOST PLANET represents the first feature novel we have ever published by a newcomer to fantasy literature. Barry Cord has written an excellent imaginative story of the far future, and we know you will readily welcome him into your group of favorites.

When we wrote Mr. Cord, informing him of the acceptance of his novel, and asked him for some autobiographical data, he sent us the following letter. We found it so interesting that we are publishing it verbatim.

Barry Cord

I am twenty-seven years old, single, and restless. I was born here in New Bedford, Mass., a city of some one hundred and fifteen thousand people, sprawled along the west bank of the Acushnet River, which empties into Buzzard's Bay. The New Bedford of whaling legend and tradition was already dead, carefully embalmed and preserved in the Dartmouth Historical Museum of Whaling and the Seaman's Bethel. The sleek-lined hulls that sailed the seven seas in quest of Earth's mightiest mammal, the sperm whale, have faded into the limbo of ghostly memories.

I left high school before graduation in rebellion against a commercial course for which I had no aptitude nor liking. Adding up columns of figures and recording entries in a ledger had no appeal for me.

I worked on and off during the depression years at catch-can jobs—mill-worker, gas-station attendant, construction, canvassing. And always I read. It was during one of these in-between periods that I took up writing. I attended a meeting of the local Manuscript Club, caught the bug, and went home to pound away. I've been pounding away on a Corona since, with some success with westerns and detective yarns.

Scientifiction has been my favorite reading since early boyhood, when a pal and I periodically raided the neighborhood junk dealer for old copies of fantasy magazines. Later, as a steady visitor to the public library; I read the old masters. Verne, Wells, England, Burroughs, Kline, Merritt, etc. One grand yarn I still remember, but have never been able to pick up again.

I believe it was titled IN THE MORNING OF TIME, and it was written by Charles D. Roberts, whose woodland stories are among the best I've read.

Some day, I promised myself, I'd write stories like that. But years went by before the idea took final shape in my mind. THE LOST PLANET is the result. It is the first of a long line of science fiction I contemplate writing, and I sincerely hope the readers of THRILLING WONDER STORIES like it as much as I enjoyed writing it.

Yet you are strangers. Strangers from the Outer Void, like the Moaavites."

IT was Starl's turn to be surprised. This golden-haired girl spoke Merikan—or rather, a slight distortion of it. He nodded.

"We are strangers, Golden One. We come from a star many parsecs away. know they will come again. That is why Seejohn has been trying to perfect the Vortex, trying it out on the Brainless Ones. When the Moaavites come again we must be ready."

Starl frowned.

"The Moaavites?"

The girl nodded, a dark horror shadowing her beautiful face.

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"Yes." She lifted a slim arm to some point behind him. "See! The Moaavites!"

The necklace about the girl's throat suddenly became a brilliant blue, as if infused with a cold fire. It pulsed, insistently, imperiously.

"Seejohn calls, Bronzed One," the girl said. "I have to go."

"Wait!" Starl took a step toward her. "I must talk to you. I must talk to this Seejohn who controls the force—"

But the girl had raised her left arm in signal to some unseen watcher. The air about her quivered into vortex again and the thin sighing swept across the clearing. Simultaneously the girl seemed to dissolve, then vanished utterly. . . .

Starl took a deep breath. The clearing was empty again, and on the far border of green the dragonflies were hovering.

"It must be a dream," Starl told himself, "some trick imposed on my senses by this alien atmosphere that makes me so heady. And yet—"

He stopped abruptly, remembering the horror in the golden-haired girl's face as she had gestured to something behind him—the Moaavites.

He turned. And what he saw held him motionless, choked in the grip of a terrible repulsion. He experienced a sense of something so alien and menacing it almost froze his heart.

Behind the space ship black, beetling cliffs towered like grim guardians over the clearing. Jutting up out of this forbidding mass was a statue of a weird Colossus. It was a huge, spiring thing of black basalt, at least three hundred feet high, shaped into a grotesque likeness of some unhuman figure.

Two colossal legs reached up to a single hip joint. But from here the body split in two—two broad, mighty torsoes, two pairs of thick arms, two horrible, utterly alien heads. The faces, Cyclopean, had but one round, lidless eye apiece, and a long gash of a fanged mouth.

Noseless, incredibly evil, that grotesque figure brooded over the clearing. In one of the huge hands was poised a long black spear. The tip of that weapon pointed down at the trapped space ship, and its point, of some red, gleaming metal or stone, shone ominously in the rays of the setting sun.

CHAPTER IV

The Stone Faces

FOR long minutes Starl stood motionless, held by the incredible evil emanating from that colossal statue. Not until Sive and Morry joined him, drawn by the look on his face, did he shake himself free of that chilling influence.

Morry's angular body was rigid, a nameless horror peering from his eyes.

"God!" he muttered, his voice shaken. "In all our experience, Sive, we've never encountered anything resembling that. So incredibly monstrous—"

Starl focused his scattered thoughts.

"The Moaavites. Beings from the Outer Void." Tersely, he repeated his conversation with the golden-haired girl. "By our standards of reasoning, Sive, this doesn't make sense. That girl was as akin to us in physical structure and biologic function as any girl back on Merika. And the spoke *our* tongue. Distorted, perhaps, but basically stemming from our own root language, the old American. And yet—"

He shrugged, his gaze running along the towering cliffs and the darkening jungle green to the far shallow sea. This was a grim, savage world, a primitive and hostile planet. It was a far cry from the world civilization of Merika, or even from the more or less civilized Earth, as recorded in the Ancient Archives. He shook his head, slowly, not comprehending.

Morry made no remark. The dour computer was staring at that noseless Colossus, his caustic tongue silenced by the utter enigma of that stone guardian of the clearing.

Sive's seamed face was troubled.

"This is a matter for the Institute, Starl. Somehow, someway, we must get back with a full report of this. Borgot must be convinced into sending a

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convoyed expedition for further investigation."

He lifted his gaze to the looming Colossus.

"This clearing, that statue, make me feel certain that this is a place of worship. These Moaavites probably landed on this planet from somewhere out in space—perhaps from one of the neighboring planets. They probably attempted an invasion, were driven out by the people of the golden-haired girl."

Starl nodded, his eyes hard.

"That's why we were trapped. They think we're invaders, too. And until we can convince this Seejohn, who controls the force that keeps us trapped here, that we mean no harm, we'll have to remain on this world, awaiting his decision."

He moved his broad shoulders, a decision crystallizing in him.

"Sive, it's best we remain in the ship for the night. Tomorrow we'll make a bid up-valley. This Seejohn and the golden-haired girl must live somewhere. People who can dematerialize themselves at will, and control a force that pulled down the GE-3 must have a civilization as great as our own. Our only hope is to contact them!"

Sive assented. Morry shrugged.

A short while later they turned in. But the feeling that they were trapped men, alone in a strange world of hostile forces, lay with them through the long still night.

THEY were ready with the morning sun. Armed with the hand Duo-Lectros, and carrying water and food and first-aid kits in the light metallic packs on their backs, they crossed the clearing.

They hesitated at the wall of green where a tangled mass of vines interlocked with giant fern trees and tall cycads to form an almost impassable barrier. They looked back on the glinting beryllium hull that was their sole connection with Merika, and in each of them was the troubling thought that this possibly was their last glimpse of the sleek Galactic ship.

Then, facing the jungle wall, Starl leveled his Duo-Lectro, squeezed the side knob. A pale, pink beam fanned

Malia

out, and in its path the matted green crumbled, vanished.

They pushed on, blasting a runway through the thick growths, three men in wedge formation, Duo guns ready for emergencies, Starl leading, opening the way. Several times they were attacked by swarms of giant dragonflies whose glittering wings beat the air with loud noise. Once a loud, hoarse whistling in the canebrakes along the river startled them.

They came, finally, to an open space where the ground rolled down to the sluggish river. Great canebrakes of horsetail reeds bordered the river marshes. Steaming vapors rolled off the water, its moist blasts blanketing their path.

Starl halted, hot and tired. Sive relaxed against the base of a huge cycad that reared its lone bulk out of the clearing. The old navigator's lined face was sweated, and fatigue crinkled his eyes. Morry grunted as he eased his pack to the ground and wiped his face.

Starl surveyed the valley with hard eyes. From the slight elevation of their position a portion of the wide valley was visible. Behind the broad river the cliffs loomed solid and precipitous. To the right, along the river, the valley narrowed, became a hemmed-in slit between massive walls. To the left was nothing but jungle, the

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flat, widening river mouth and the shallow, hazy sea.

Morry's gaze was bitter.

"We'll never get off this hellish planet, Sive. We were fools to have landed here in the first place. There's nothing in this valley but jungle and heat and death!"

Sive's face was drawn. He looked up at the grim-faced Starl.

"Perhaps we should have remained in the ship," he said. "If the worst came to the worst we could have tried the space-warpers—"

"We can't turn back now, Sive," Starl snapped. "Somewhere on this planet there must be cities, a civilization. We'll find it. Even if we have to cross this river, climb those cliffs, we'll find it!"

The grim determination in his voice struck fire in the old navigator's eyes. He nodded, smiling a little, thinking that the fighting spirit of the GE would never die out so long as it enlisted men like Starl.

"We may never get through—"

HE didn't finish. His gaunt body stiffened, his seamed face graying. Beside him Morry, in the act of lifting his pack to his shoulders, went rigid, a startled cry wrenching from his lips.

Starl whirled, flat-footed, like a cat. Instinctively, he leveled the Duo-Lectro in his fist.

Not two hundred yards from them a huge creature pushed out of the brakes, a massive-armored giant weighing about fifteen tons. Its head was protected by enormously thick bone ridges, and interlocking bone plates protected the vulnerable expanse of neck. A huge, spiked tail twitched ominously behind it.

It stood partially in the cleairng, its small reddish eyes fastened dully upon the puny creatures under the lone cycad. Then, the sight finally registering hate in the small, limited brain, it charged like a thundering avalanche, emitting a hoarse, shrill whistle as it did so.

Starl leveled the Duo gun. He braced himself, waited grimly while that terrible engine of destruction hurtled toward them. The maximum range of the Duo-Lectro hand gun was a hundred yards, and he squeezed the knob then.

That huge armored head vanished before the disintegrating influence of that pink beam. The huge bulk came on, a strange and macabre sight—as if that giant body was unaware of its headless state. Not until Starl sheared off both front feet did that massive body collapse, not ten yards from them.

Morry edged near Starl, his breath coming easier. Sive's sharp voice, from a little behind them, suddenly warned:

"Starl—in the sky!"

Over that still quivering mass of flesh a dark shadow drifted, and they looked up barely in time to see a huge, winged reptile glide down toward the body.

Starl's ray disintegrated a bony wing, and the pterodactyl dropped, screeching with pain. It fell to the earth just beyond the still twitching mound of flesh, and came at them with one wing dragging, a long, sharp-toothed beak clicking hungrily.

The combined rays of Starl, Morry and Sive blasted it to nothingness.

Morry licked dry lips, his face ashen.

"Let's get out of here before the place becomes filled with them."

THEY needed no urging. They backed warily across the clearing, and even as they entered the jungle other winged reptiles dropped down, like giant vultures, to fight and rend over that mountain of flesh.

Starl led the way again. They blasted a path till they came upon a wide, trampled runway leading up-valley. They moved along it, taut and grim, the Duo guns jutting readily. The jungle began to thin, and several times they came upon ragged, stony stretches and small craterlike pits in which brackish pools of water lay stagnant.

They crossed these exposed clearings warily, their attention divided by the menace of the huge drifting shadows they saw gliding down from rocky aeries in the high black cliffs, and the occasional sounds of the savage combat from the brakes fringing the narrowing river.

It was a savage world of death, of eat and be eaten, where only the strong

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survived. Starl stroked his tanned forehead. Doubts came to him. Had he been a victim of some hallucination? Had he really talked to a golden-haired girl back in the clearing where the GE-3 lay? Was there, in this savage, hostile land a city—a civiliation? It seemed incredible.

A strange twilight was drawing over the land now. Looking up, they saw the huge, majestic rings, composed of myriad moons, edging out the climbing Sun. Strange, writhing bands of colored lights played over them as they watched the cosmic spectacle.

For almost two hours that strange twilight lasted, and a hush fell over the valley. Then the Sun speared down again, with white-hot impact, and they pushed on up-valley.

The river began to narrow, became a swift-moving current. The cliff-wall they were paralleling drew close to the river and they were forced to climb up along the broken base, like ants scrambling across the giant stone shoulders.

They were moving along a ledge some hundred and fifty feet above the narrow valley strip when a heavy hissing, like a blast from a steam vent, stopped them. The sound came from below them, around the corner of the stone shoulder they were crossing. Cautiously they crept forward, Duo guns ready. Then, from a vantage point a hundred and fifty feet above a stony arena, they watched two giant reptiles lock in mortal combat.

One of the monsters was a two-legged, upright creature that reminded them of the sinister Moaavite statue. It stood erect, perhaps twenty feet high, a fearsome creature with a massive-jawed, scaly head. It balanced itself on its hind legs, two disproportionately small forepaws drawn up under its chin, long talons ready. The savage head was cocked to one side, as if the creature were judging its opponent.

"Tyrannosaurus Rex!" Starl whispered, remembering pictures of the mammoth reptile in the ancient records. "And a Triceratops!"

THE Tyrannosaurus Rex had a long double gash along one flank, ripped by the double horn of the squat, heavily armored saurian. Evidently it had just been beaten off in its first attack, and it began to circle warily, respecting that formidable horned head.

It charged again, without warning. It came in a little too fast for the slower moving Triceratops. It hit the heavy, rhinolike giant in the side, bowling it over. With a hoarse, triumphant hissing the Tyrannosaurus Rex thrust its fanged jaws at that unprotected belly. . . .

Suddenly, a muffled bong, vibrating out of the very earth, froze the watchers on the rocks. It caught the huge dinosaur with its jaws ripping flesh, held it motionless, as if that strange sound forced fear even into its savage head.

And with the imperious bong came a strange, high sighing. The air about the reptilian monsters quivered, writhed. A moment later the Tyrannosaurus Rex and the fallen, dying Triceratops were gone, and the rocky slope below them became still and quiet.

The faces of the three explorers from Merika were drawn.

"It's Seejohn!" Starl muttered. "Testing out the Vortex—"

Beside him Morry started.

"Look!" His voice was a hoarse, unbelieving whisper. "Faces!"

Across the narrow river the cliffs jutted bold, stone-weathered faces at them. High up on the foremost stone bulk faces had been chiseled. *Human faces!* Three of them were distinct, though noticeably eroded by the ravages of time. The fourth image was partially destroyed by some great rent in the cliff itself.

"Faces!" Starl rasped. "Faces carved in the very cliff. Sive—we must be dreaming. This can't be!"

Sive was rigid.

"The ancient Rushmore Memorial!" he said, his voice unbelieving. The ancient records tell of it—of the four faces carved from a cliff in the Black Hills! Washington, Lincoln, Jefferson and Roosevelt. Incredible as it appears, this *must* be ancient Earth! This is our homeland—America!"

For long, stunned moments the three men stood on that ledge, staring up at those ancient faces.

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Shocked and bewildered, the bony Morry edged away from Starl and Sive. He moved along the ledge for better view. And, as they crouched there, staring awedly, trying to reconcile this hot, steaming world and its mighty rings with the homeland Earth of legend, the ominous bonging sounded again.

It froze them. Morry turned slightly. The air about him seemed to be dancing. Starl straightened, his face going grim.

"Morry!" he warned sharply. "Morry—"

It was too late. The air about the dour-faced computer was already writhing, enveloping the man. Morry fought to get free. But even as he struggled, his angular body was dissolving, fading from view. In a moment he was gone, as if some invisible eraser had wiped him from the ledge with a single stroke.

CHAPTER V

Lost Homeland

SIVE sagged weakly, the loss of the dour-faced computer hitting him hard. Horror was in his eyes.

Starl's face was a ghastly white.

"It got Morry—pulled him apart!" he sobbed. The young Galactic explorer's voice broke. He hid his face in his hands. "It was my fault, Sive. My fault in talking you into a landing here."

Sive came to him, laid a comforting hand on his shoulder.

"No, Starl. It wasn't your fault, or mine—or Morry's." He looked up-valley where the cliff walls seemed to come together, dark and unsurmountable against the sky. "We'll have to go back, Starl. We'll have to chance using the space-warpers. We can't go ahead in this savage land, indefinitely. The charges in our Duos are limited."

Starl nodded absently. He was looking up at the stern, ageless faces that brooded down over this end of the valley, lost in speculation.

"I know it's incredible!" Sive said, as if reading his thoughts. The old navigator's voice was shaken, awed. "But, Starl—we *are* on ancient Earth. We *must* be. That girl, so like ourselves. These faces—"

"But the rings, Sive—the whole changed System?" The struggle for understanding was in Starl's voice. "All this—" He waved an arm over the valley, up to a soaring pterodactyl. "There were cities on Earth when our forebears fled. Great cities—"

"You forget that more than three hundred thousand years have passed," the old navigator reminded him. "Many things may have happened in those years." Sive looked up at the rings in the sky. "Even the Ancients predicted what would happen if their satellite, the Moon, was ever driven too close to Earth. They knew it would result in the breakup of their satellite, the tiny world being unable to resist the titanic gravitational force of the Earth. Well, that's what happened! The Moon was pulled apart. Most of its broken mass formed rings about the mother planet; the rest must have rained down in fiery meteor showers on Earth."

SIVE paused a moment, shifted his weight from one foot to the other, then went on.

"Some catastrophe, a dark star perhaps, plunging out of the cold depths of space, may have passed too close to the old System. Brushing by, it played havoc with the planets, shifted orbits, dragged many of them away with it. Such a shifting of great gravitational stresses as must have occurred may have wrenched one of the star's own dead planets from it. That huge inner planet may be the one, Starl. Earth survived. And giant Jupiter, far out on the rim of the System was stripped of most of its moons.

"Perhaps, even, the Moaavites come from that frozen, captured planet. . . ." The veteran space-farer spread his hands. "I know, Starl—it sounds like a wild theory, unsupported by evidence. But it offers a rational explanation for all this we have seen."

Starl nodded.

"Some way, then, somehow, a portion of the Earth people that were left

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behind when our forebears leaped into space, escaped the Frozen Death. Somehow they lived through the cosmic catastrophe that followed—the great meteor bombardment that occurred when the moon cracked up into those rings. And then Time smoothed the pitted earth. And after the titanic upheaval that resulted in conditions approximating the early eras, evolution started anew with the rise of the giant reptiles. Perhaps cosmic rays are more powerful now, affecting the recurrence in Earth's evolutionary cycle."

The incredible saga they envisioned took their breath away. Approaching darkness finally brought them back to reality.

"We must start back at once, Starl, before night overtakes us," Sive suggested.

They retraced their steps, guided by the uranium pilot light Sive carried strapped to his right arm, like a wristwatch. They came down off the cliff, cut across the tangled jungle. Twice they had to stop the charge of giant, armored animals, veritable tanks that shook the solid earth in their lumber-

The huge, armored head vanished before the disintegrating beam

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ing run. The charges in the Duo guns were getting low.

Several times, also, that sinister, muffled bonging sounded—and close to them the air writhed, dissolving rock and vegetation instantly in its blind groping.

"Seejohn, or whoever it behind that Vortex," muttered Starl, "seems to be out to get us. We've got to keep moving—not give it a chance to focus!"

DOGGEDLY, they pushed on, blasting a path through the jungle. Starl's face was grim, and sweat made thin streaks down his beard-stubbled cheeks. Sive began to labor, gasp. Starl dropped back, made the old navigator place his right arm around his neck, and plunged on, supporting most of the oldster's weight. Tight-lipped, a premonition of impending disaster weighing him, Starl raced the Sun down-valley to the trapped space ship.

The earlier sense of lightness, of power, gave way with the continued double effort. Lead dragged at his legs now, and his breath came harsh and rasping.

"I've got to rest, Starl," Sive said presently, breathing heavily. "I can't keep on—"

They halted among rocks on the side of a grassy slope that lifted to the beetling cliffs. Below them, and still down-valley they could see the clearing they had left that morning and the long glinting hull of the GE-3. Sight of the ship heartened them.

Starl moved to the edge of the rock nest, his gaze lifting to the giant Moaavite statue looming like a landmark over the clearing. Behind him, slumped against a rock, Sive was resting.

"Get through to the Institute, Starl," the old man panted. "No matter what may happen—try to get through. Set the power indicators on zero plus two, before shunting the Mav space-warpers on. Remember that, Starl, about the power indicators, in case I don't make it. It's your one slim chance."

"Nothing's going to happen, Sive," Starl said. "We'll get through together. It's Morry I'm—"

He whirled, his blood freezing in him. That ominous bonging had sounded again, muffled, imperious, undeniable. Close to him the air suddenly quivered. He felt himself buffeted, whirled about, as if on the rim if a giant whirlpool. Then he was flung, like a rag doll, to the ground.

He groped to his feet, half stunned, blood streaming down his rock-gashed left cheek. Fifteen feet away Sive was striving to rise, a hopeless desperation twisting his lined face. And even as Starl watched, the old navigator's body began to shimmer, dissolve. The oldster's eyes seemed to tear, then faded. And like a dying whisper he heard Sive's voice:

"Starl . . . get through—"

And then Sive was gone, and the air was still and hot and heavy in the rock nest. Starl sagged back against a boulder, unconsciously wiping blood from his cheek with the back of his hand. A hard defiance crackled in his voice.

"I'll get through, Sive. And I'll come back. I promise. I'll come back—and I'll find you and Morry, wherever you are!"

Then he turned, raced recklessly toward the clearing still far down-valley.

The sinister forces working on this planet were beyond his comprehension. But, somehow, he had to lift the GE-3 against the Force that held it like a pinned fly to that clearing of the Moaavites. Somehow he had to get back to Merika, back to the Institute, with his incredible story.

THE Sun was a swollen orb above the western cliffs when he burst into the clearing. High above the GE-3 the Moaavite Colossus poised, the last rays glinting evilly from the red point of the huge spear. Starl swore harshly at the great figure.

He reached the space ship without incident. Once inside, he made his way forward to the control room. His face was grim. He knew it was almost tantamount to suicide to use the Mav space-warpers in the gravitational field of this planet. But he had no choice.

He made his way to the control panel. Suddenly he went rigid, his attention caught by the televisor sig-

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nal on the board. It was glowing on and off, insistently. Someone was trying to get through!

Starl clicked on the set, his thoughts whirling. Not even the giant transmitter at the Institute could reach this far across space. And, to Starl's knowledge, there was no other ship belonging to the Galactic Fleet in the vicinity.

The screen blurred, focused, blurred again, as if whoever was trying to get through was having trouble. Then it cleared, and Starl gasped.

Morry was staring at him, his bony face filling the screen, his eyes bright, desperate. Recognition glowed in his gaze. "Starl!" he rasped sharply. "Starl—get through! I've switched off the force. Quick!"

Vaguely, behind Morry's face, in the background, Starl could see a vast room, brilliantly lighted. He saw strange apparatus, giant coils. . . . Then he became aware that Morry's face was going tense, saw the desperate urgency come into his eyes.

"For God's sake, Starl—take off! They're coming—"

The sullen-faced computer turned, his gaze shunting to a point not visible on the screen. His voice crackled once more. "Hurry—"

And then the screen went blank.

Starl snapped on the motors. All speculation was driven from him at the moment. He heard that ominous bonging again, heralding another of those strange ether vortexes. Looking through the steelex, he saw vegetation at the edge of the clearing shimmer, vanish in the grip of that sweeping force.

Starl pressed the lift controls, felt the ship respond. Freed of the bond that had harnessed it to Earth, the Galactic Explorer left the planet like a silver bullet.

CHAPTER VI

Return to Earth

SLOWLY, Starl eased back in the pneumatic seat. The throb of the mighty motors was steady, deep-toned. He lifted a hand up to the gash on his cheek, probing at the pained stiffness there. He was freed of Seejohn's Force. In a few hours he'd be out of the planet's pull altogether, and then he'd shunt on the space-warpers and set his course for far-off Merika.

Twisting in the seat; he looked down on the green planet dwindling below him. He could make out the sprawl of land areas now, partially obscured by low-hanging clouds.

Those continents—he remembered them from old maps of Earth, he had studied in the musty books of the Archives. Three hundred thousand years had wrought their inevitable changes, but the main body masses remained recognizable. North and South America lay below him, and he noticed that the land bridge of the Panama Isthmus that had connected them was gone. He observed, too, that the jungle green now reached up to the very Poles, where a fringe of white marked the vastly shrunken ice-caps.

Ancient Earth! The lost planet! The answer to the long riddle of the Merikans.

Starl's lips twisted grimly. Somewhere on that planet Morry and Sive still lived. Despite the manner of their disappearance, he now knew they had not died. Morry's twisted features, staring at him from the visi-screen, had been proof of that.

The Merikan's strong hand closed firmly on the power lever. He couldn't leave without his friends. It went against all his natural instincts, against all that had been implanted in him at the Institute where he had studied and trained for his position with the GE. It was a tradition of the Service that no member had ever deserted a comrade, no matter what the circumstances.

But Sive's last, tortured plea rang in the young space-adventurer's ears, even as he moved to head the ship back. "Starl . . . *get through—*" The Merikan caught himself, his hard jaw ridging.

There was nothing he could do. He was alone. It would be best to get back to the Institute, tell his story to Borgot and the Board. He knew the chances were his tale would not be be-

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lieved. Of late the constant search of the GE had come to be viewed as a mythical quest—a baseless legend of the Old Ones. Morry's views reflected that of the majority of Merikans.

He'd make them believe, somehow, Starl vowed ardently. He had to! He had to get Borgot to send an Expeditionary Force back across the space gulf.

He turned to the big electroscope at his elbow, swung the instrument in slow survey of the land masses receding below him. The continents grew close as he manipulated the magnification. Huge broken ridges appeared in close-up, wide valleys and rolling uplands. A huge inland sea washed the Great Plains area where the old Mississippi had split the United States. Starl guessed that this was the sea he and his companions had glimpsed from the cliff-locked valley of the Faces.

METHODICALLY, Starl scanned the continent. But nowhere did he glimpse a sign of towering buildings, of cities, of any indication of the Aleetians. He saw nothing but mountains and jungles and hot, steaming marshlands. It was a primitive scene such as early Earth must have been, long before the advent of Man.

Yet Starl remembered the ancient faces that had looked down at him and his companions from the valley cliffs—the ageless faces his long dead forebears had carved, laboriously, into the very rocks. He remembered, too, a golden-haired girl magically materializing in the clearing. And there was also Morry, in some huge laboratory, his face desperate, urging him to leave.

Starl shook the riddle of it from his numbed mind. Turning, he swung the electroscope in casual survey of the star-studded sky, focusing it on the strange planet closer to the Sun. Huge, wreathed in perpetual clouds, it carried a sinister warning to the lean Merikan. Perhaps it was because he recalled Sive's theory, told him back in the valley of the Faces, that he experienced such a feeling of alienness about that mysterious globe.

If Sive was right, then that planet had been a cold world for countless ages, circling a long dead star in its pilgrimage through space. And now, wrenched from its mother sun in the cosmic cataclysm that had utterly changed the old Solar System, it was a planet reborn. Earth's solar orb had warmed this dead world; the radiant rays had rekindled the spark of life.

Starl shrugged. It was theory, only. . . .

His thoughts froze, caught in the sudden shock of what he was seeing in the electroscope!

Across the interplanetary gulf, just above the rim of that strange, cloud-veiled planet, tiny specks were appearing. A score of them, at least. Small, glinting particles shooting toward Earth. And even as Starl watched, one by one those specks seemed to dim, vanish against the starry blackness.

The lean Merikan stiffened.

"The Moaavites!" he exclaimed involuntarily.

And even as the grim realization whipped home to him, disaster struck. Behind him, from the power room, sounded a sharp, crackling report. Weakened by the terrific strain Sive had put the generators through when he had tried to pull away from the Force, some part had let go. The mighty motors coughed, throbbed brokenly. Another loud, deafening report burst across the room—then a final, heavy roar sent a shudder through the ship.

The motors died abruptly, as if they had been switched off. A terrible silence filled the control room, heavy with the acrid odor of ozone and fused metal. Then the ship heeled over, went down in a sharp, sickening drop.

GRAY-FACED, Starl hunched over the control board. The planet seemed to rush up at him through the steelex observation windows. Desperately he jabbed at the power buttons. But the motors remained silent. A cold helplessness seized him. This looked like the end of it.

He had found the lost planet—and would die on it!

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His muscles drawn tight, his eyes hard and defiant, the young space-adventurer waited. Below him the planet was a huge ball, rapidly growing larger, filling his entire vision. He could make out huge crinklings on the land mass below him—giant mountain chains dwarfed by distance. The Earth revolved under him, and he knew he was falling in a great trajectory, as if the GE-3 had been a huge shell fired from that valley of the Faces.

Below him water appeared, a gray, heaving waste of it stretching to the horizons. The trim Galactic ship was plunging through the atmosphere now, like a flashing meteor, its heat-resistant outer shell beginning to glow. Starl sat, grim-faced, watching the broad ocean rush up at him.

Was this to be the final resting place of the pride of the Galactic Fleet—the bottom of this ancient sea? Starl wondered.

Then land appeared, green against the western horizon. It grew larger with amazing rapidity, seemed to spread out, move toward him, as if to catch that falling craft.

And Starl, hunched over the control board, staring at inevitable death through the steelex observation windows, still had a moment to wonder at the awe-inspiring scene that appeared below him.

He was dropping on a high, green-clothed tableland that sheered off into the gray ocean. A vast tableland stretching back more than seventy miles to ragged peaks in the background.

Out of this background, miles apart at their source, twin rivers flowed to common meeting. They forked into a huge body of water on the very edge of that tableland. Like an enormous blue saucer that strange lake hung above the ocean, its overflow falling in a ceaseless, mist-shrouded drop two thousand feet to the sea below.

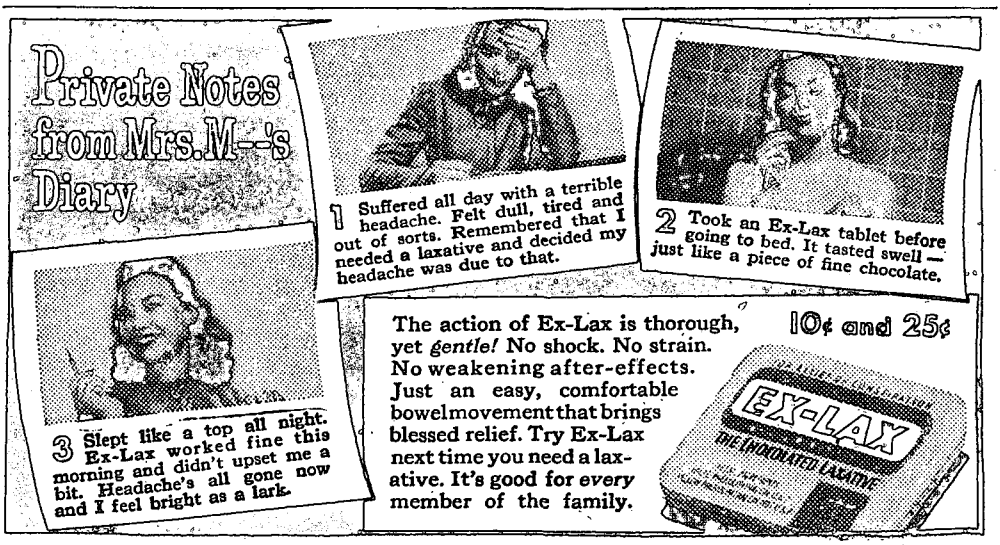
The grandeur of those colossal falls whipped the surge of life through the lean Merikan. There had to be some way to halt this sickening drop—some emergency—

Emergency! His sharp gaze swung back to the intricate control board. He spotted the button marked EM-X and remembered Sive's explanation of this new device. It had been but recently added to the ship, a safety device to be used only in cases such as this, when the main-drive motors were out of commission.

Starl had never seen it used, had almost forgotten about it. Whether it worked from the generators, or from some other source of power, he did not know. But there was no longer time for speculation.

He was dropping straight for a rocky island that thrust like a tongue into that tableland lake when he jabbed the emergency control.

[*Turn page*]


Private Notes from Mrs. M—'s Diary
1 Suffered all day with a terrible headache. Felt dull, tired and out of sorts. Remembered that I needed a laxative and decided my headache was due to that.
2 Took an Ex-Lax tablet before going to bed. It tasted swell — just like a piece of fine chocolate.
3 Slept like a top all night. Ex-Lax worked fine this morning and didn't upset me a bit. Headache's all gone now and I feel bright as a lark.
The action of Ex-Lax is thorough, yet *gentle!* No shock. No strain. No weakening after-effects. Just an easy, comfortable bowelmovement that brings blessed relief. Try Ex-Lax next time you need a laxative. It's good for *every* member of the family.
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Atomic flares suddenly shot out from the bow of the ship. The downward plunge was slowed, cushioned to slow fall. The nose lifted, reluctantly, it seemed. And then the ship hit, went splintering through a grove of trees, its heavy bulk shattering them like matchwood. The long, tearing impact shook Starl. But strapped as he was in the shock-absorbing navigator's seat, he was unhurt.

With a last, rending crash the sleek pride of the Galactic Fleet came to an abrupt halt, its nose jammed against a towering, crumbly mound of gray stone.

CHAPTER VII

After 300,000 Years

FOR long minutes Starl remained where he was, shaken, almost unable to believe he was still alive. Then he straightened, a hard grin lining his lips.

"We made it," he muttered. "A little banged up—but we made it. Now to see what the devil went wrong."

He went back to the power room. The huge drive engines were intact. But the power generators, which also fed the Mav space-warpers, were a mess. It would take weeks of work rebuilding them, even if he had the parts. And he didn't. He stood there, lean and hard-eyed, looking down on the fused metal. It certainly looked as if the GE-3 would never whip across the interstellar paths again. The GE-3 would never drop to a landing in the great space field at Nu Cago. His space days were over.

Morry! Sive! He looked about him quickly, almost expecting to see the computer peering at him from the chart desk, glimpse Sive's austere features bent over the controls. But he was alone.

The realization shook him. He couldn't stay in here, with the ghosts of Morry and Sive haunting his thoughts. He had to get out. Somewhere on this strange, altered planet that had spawned his race were the Aleetians, his kin. And with them were Morry and Sive.

Tight-lipped with purpose he moved to the wall compartment, took down a brace of Duo-Lectros, made sure they were fully charged. He belted them about his waist. The small emergency pack he strapped securely to his back. Then he opened the port and stepped out.

The ship had cut a terrible swath among the trees. Starl's sharp gaze noted that here, on the high plateau, the tree ferns and cycads had given ground to hardier trees. The air, also, was clearer here, unlike the steaming atmosphere of the valley of the Faces.

With long, sure-footed leaps he made his way clear of the tangled, splintered mass. On clearer ground he turned, looked back ruefully at the ship resting with blunted nose against the gray stone mound. Something about the appearance of that mound caught his attention.

He moved to it, a strange light flickering in his keen eyes. The mound was perhaps fifty feet high, and several hundred feet long. A desolate hump, grown over with hardy plants, clusters of red, bell-like flowers.

Starl picked up a piece of the gray stone. Friable, it almost disintegrated under his fingers. Concrete! Mingled with it was the red tracery of rust that had once been shining steel.

THE implication of this gripped the lean Merikan. Concrete and steel —the ruins of some ancient structure! His brain an eddy of feverish thoughts, the young explorer scrambled to the top of the mound. From this vantage point he looked over the wooded island.

Here and there among the trees he could make out similar mounds, like headstones marking the grave of an ancient city. Out beyond the island tip the sluggish flow of the combined rivers rippled far out to the middle of the lake.

And now, with the wind in his face, Starl heard the far, faint thunder of the falls, like a ceaseless mutter.

Starl had to shake off the strange spell that held him. Slowly, the Duo-gun ready in his fist, he made his way down that ancient mound, his gray eyes troubled. An ancient city, long

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forgotten. Ruins, no doubt, of some metropolis of the Old Ones. Dead and forgotten these three hundred thousand years.

His eyes clouded. Would this be the only signs of human life that he would find on this forsaken sphere?

The sense of loneliness deepened in him as he passed the long silent mounds that were everywhere on this desolate island. He had the uncanny feeling of a man walking through the graveyard of a long dead people.

Close upon the western shore he came upon the highest of these strange mounds. A huge block of stone and concrete, partially collapsed. A great gaping hole leading downward showed, shadowed by giant trees.

Traces of red rust lay about the base of that mound, and shreds of it clung to the stone sides of the gaping cavern. It seemed to indicate that some massive steel door had once sealed that entrance from prying eyes. But Time had long since destroyed it, as it does all barriers.

Duo-Lectro in his right hand, a flash in his left, Starl stabbed a beam of light over the sagging archway. Markings chiseled deep in the very rock caught his eye, and he played the beam on them.

NEW YORK

Tunnel No. III

FOR a long still moment the Merikan stood, staring at that ancient lettering. He could scarcely believe his eyes. New York! Mighty metropolis of the Ancient Ones. He turned a little to look back along the dark forest where other mounds showed. Three hundred thousand years had done this to that ancient city! He shuddered at the thought of the titanic cataclysm that had raised the entire coast two thousand feet above the sea.

"New York!" He muttered the name aloud as he stepped closer to the cavernous hole, sending the beam down into the Stygian blackness. A strong, fetid odor wafted up to him from the depths.

The lone explorer played the beam along the walls. Twisted remnants of steel bulkplates hung from the slimy stone sides that angled down at steep slant. Starl stepped closer, swinging the beam. And from the blackness below something stirred. A huge body heaved, as if disturbed by that probing finger of light. A loud, angry whistling, like the blast of some ancient locomotive, lashed from the depths.

Starl jumped back, Duo-gun lifting. Out of that ancient tunnel mouth a huge horned head thrust, a full twelve feet above the Merikan. Its enormous body lay in the shadows as it reared its ugly head above the space adventurer. A fanged mouth, seven feet from jaw to skull, poised for a downward lunge at the tiny figure not twenty feet away.

Starl pressed the Duo-knob. The terrible head disappeared. The huge body recoiled, went crashing back into the obsidian depths of that ancient monument to a vanished people. The monster's violent death throes started a collapse of the crumbly walls, and rocks and detritus rolled down, completely sealing that hole.

Starl backed away, a thin line of sweat glittering on his brow. Overhead the sky was paling, preluding the night. The man from Merika set his jaw, grimly. The best place to spend the night would be inside the space ship. In the morning he'd start out anew, work his way across the western river that had once been the Hudson, and head overland for the towering hills he had seen in the background.

But the thought came to him as he started back that his chances for survival in this savage land were slim. The charges in the Duo-guns were limited. And when those went. . . .

CHAPTER VIII

The Coming of the Moaavites

STARL left the ancient island of Manhattan at dawn the next day. For three days thereafter the Merikan fought his way westward, a gray-clad tireless figure, grim of face, steely of eye. A small, lost figure driven on by the memory of a golden-haired girl whose voice he would always remember—and by the knowledge that some-

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where in this vast and savage world Morry and Sive still lived. And that perilous odyssey changed Starl, hardened to iron an already physically perfect frame. He learned to expect the huge rings each noon, when the Sun was shadowed, and colored, shifting lights, like countless spectrum bands, played over the hot land.

Sometimes at night, as he huddled in the branch fork of some giant forest monarch and looked up to the glowing rings and the myriads of blazing stars, he thought of far-off Merika—of the planet that was one vast connected city. Where vegetation was open and parklike. Where animals were the wards of the state, carefully cared for—not the hunters of men.

And then the sound of a ponderous bulk passing below him, the far, curdling scream of some animal dying beneath rending fangs, brought a thin, incredulous smile to his lips.

So, for three days Starl fought his way toward the western hills. He pushed himself on relentlessly, with despair coming to gnaw at his soul.

THE afternoon of the third day found him a weary figure, his lean cheeks rough with a growth of reddish beard. He was toiling over a low, rocky ridge that looked down, on one side, on an almost impassable stretch of marshland. He halted here, in a crevice between rocks, took out a slab of cold meat from his emergency pack, and munched it thoughtfully.

Already, the charges of one Duo-gun had given out. There were plenty of obstacles he would encounter before he could win his way across that saurian-infested swamp. The struggle would be worth the effort, if he found that which he sought in the end. But to go on, not knowing what lay beyond—

For it was three days since he had last run across a sign of human life. He had not even seen any mounds, such as had marked ancient New York, where he had left the GE-3. There was nothing but forest, heat, and the loneliness of a man lost from his kind.

Starl shook his head, defiantly. He had to push on. He'd make the western hills, at least—

He was straightening, shifting the small pack on his big, broad shoulders, when he heard it—the first sound not of the jungle. A high, thin screaming in the upper atmosphere. Far away at first, it was coming nearer.

It twisted the space-adventurer about like a cat, wiping the weariness from his gaunt frame. Crouched, his blue eyes slitting against the sky glare, he searched for the cause of that high whistling.

He saw nothing!

Yet the sound increased, and Starl, wonderingly, sensed a heavy body hurtling Earthward.

The Merikan's gaze followed that sound downward. For a moment he seemed to catch a glimpse of twisting flares streaking over the marshland from the east. Below these flares reeds shriveled and water geysered and boiled.

Just below the Merikan, at the edge of the swamp, a grove of tree ferns suddenly smashed to the ground, as if a giant body ploughed through them. Soft earth and tangled green were spumed about for a thousand yards beyond, and the jarring impact of that crash sent the denizens of the swampland to lumbering deeper into the wilderness, their hoarse whistlings trailing them.

Then stillness came again over the marshland.

Starl remained on the ridge, crouched in the shallow crevice. Whatever had ripped its way across the swamp had come to a stop. Yet nothing was visible, save torn earth and scattered fragments of tree fern!

Starl wiped sweat from his eyes. He had seen many incredible things since his landing on this planet that had spawned his people. But this—

A vast hissing, as of released air, cut across his thoughts. And then, out of apparently thin air, an incredible figure stepped down to the edge of the marshland! It was a Moaavite. At least thirty feet high it bulked, a gigantic, ebony black thing of evil, two-headed, twin-torsoed. In one of its four hands it carried a replica of the spear Starl had seen in the hand of the towering statue in the valley of the Faces.

It moved away from its point of materialization in three incredible strides

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then turned back, as if it had forgotten something. Abruptly, a hoarse, staccato whistling broke from the creature, evidently an order to invisible companions.

A moment later the huge bulk of a space ship materialized in the marsh. It was a monster craft, nearly a quarter mile in length. Cigar-shaped, windowless, of dull gray metal, it lay partially buried in muck and water. On either side of the narrowing prow, like short, protruding snouts from armored blisters, weapons broke the symmetry of that hull. They were set so they could be revolved in a vertical path.

Starl watched, the Duo-gun tense in his fist. A war craft! He remembered now the twenty glinting specks he had seen leaving the cloudy planet—the specks that had vanished. Invisibility! Then the Moaavites, inhuman and alien, also had a vast science of their own! But where was the rest of the fleet? Starl considered. Probably something had gone wrong with this one ship—a partial failure of the motors perhaps—and they had been forced to drop out of the main flight, make a landing here.

EVEN as he watched a score of the huge, nightmare Moaavites emerged from the belly of that giant ship. Some carried tools. They circled the hull, sloshing ungainly in the swamp, grotesque, incredible creatures. Some went back within. In a few moments the sound of repair work echoed through the hot stillness of the steaming swamp.

Starl grew restless. The shallow crevice barely hid him from view of the creatures below. And at any moment one of the Moaavites might take a notion to prowl up the ridge.

The Merikan set himself to wait, fighting thoughts that clamored inside him. This was the invasion the golden-haired girl had spoken of—the invasion for which Seejohn had been preparing. What was about to happen he did not know. He was lost, alone in this strange world, and he felt helpless and out of things.

If only there were some way he could get in touch with the Aleetians, warn them.

Cautiously, he eased out of the crevice, his gaze sliding to the ship in the swamp. There were no Moaavites on this side of the craft, at the moment, and he took this chance to edge back up the ridge. Ten feet from the crest he straightened, broke into quick run.

And in that moment they spotted him. One of the huge monsters, coming around the stern of the ship in sloshing strides, suddenly let out a shrill, staccato whistling.

Starl ran then. He was a fast man, and the ridge, sloping down toward the forest on the other side was fairly open, permitting him to make some speed. But the stride of the Moaavites was incredible. They covered over twenty feet with each thrust of their massive legs. Starl, glancing back over his shoulder as he neared the bottom of the slope, saw two of them top the ridge, one slightly ahead of the other.

They bore down on him at a pace that made flight useless, and he knew, even as his breath began to labor in his lungs, that he'd have to turn, make a fight for it.

He was still a hundred yards from the first gloomy forest growths when he turned, set himself. Did he have a chance, a puny mortal alone, opposing those oncoming monsters? Could the small Duo-gun that seemed to glint futilely in his hand stop those mountains of flesh?

The young explorer shrugged carelessly, smiled a sweat-stained, grim smile and leveled the weapon. He made a silent vow. At least one Moaavite would die under the mighty rings of Earth before the lone Merikan passed forever into the Great Beyond.

The foremost creature was close now, evidently intent on plucking Starl where he stood. The Merikan could see the gaping fanged jaws, the incredible, saucerlike eyes that were as cloudy and evil as their planet. The Moaavite was less than eighty feet away when Starl pressed the Duo-knob.

The disintegrator parted the Moaavite's body, just at the hip joint. The creature seemed to come apart, loosely, in a tangle of legs and arms and heads that twitched and rolled with a ter-

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ribly tenacious hold on life.

Starl stumbled back, his gorge rising. Two hundred feet behind, the second Moaavite had come to an abrupt halt. He had seen the fate of his companion. And beyond him, Starl could see still others of the inhuman monsters topping the ridge.

The second Moaavite carried a red-tipped spear. He swung it now in a short arc, then lined it at the Merikan, as if he intended to hurl the weapon at his quarry. Instead, a reddish streak, like the slash of a lightning bolt, zigzagged from that glowing red point.

Starl felt a heavy electric shock spin him off his feet, stun him. He writhed, tried to get up off the ground. Dazedly, out of pained eyes, he saw the Moaavite tower over him. He made a last effort to retrieve his Duo-gun, which had fallen from his grasp. But the world seemed to be spinning around. . . .

HALF conscious, the young space-rover saw a giant hand reach down for him. It clamped about his waist, the long, prehensile fingers wrapping completely around him. Like some tiny doll he was lifted thirty feet above the ground, brought to the level of a huge, unblinking eye.

The pressure about Starl's ribs nearly cracked them. Helpless, he watched that great cloudy eye revolve, clockwise, as it surveyed him. The fanged, lipless mouth below him suddenly parted and a staccato whistling, that might have bee raucous laughter, issued from it, bringing a blast of fetid breath that nearly choked the Merikan.

Then a huge hand closed about Starl's right arm, with the firm intention of pulling it, bodily, from its socket. But a hoarse series of whistling from one of the approaching Moaavites stopped Starl's captor. The creature turned, bobbed a head in quick jerks, as if acknowledging a leader's orders.

Held high in the grip of the Moaavite, Starl was carried back to the space ship in the swamp.

Its hugeness reminded the Merikan of the giant transport liners that plied between Merika and the inner worlds of Rigel. A long central runway, lighted by soft green lights, led forward to the prow. He was taken along this runway to the radio and navigation room, just behind the control chambers.

Several Moaavites crowded into the big room, moving at the orders of one whose burly torsoes were scarred by long grayish welts across the chest. He, evidently, was the leader aboard this ship.

Starl was handled like some botanical specimen in a biology class. A wide, flat board was set up on a long metal table in room center, and he was propped to a sitting position against this, clamped to the board with strong, elastic bands. A piece of apparatus, somewhat like a visi-screen, was set up before him. A burnished metal cap, several sizes too big for him, was placed over his head, plugged to an outlet in the screen. On the other side of the apparatus the Moaavite leader donned a similar helmet on one of his heads.

The creature spoke then, in that queer, staccato whistling that was the Moaavite manner of communication. But his words came to Starl in perfect Merikan:

"I am Thars, captain of this ship, the *Thunderbolt*. I am talking to you through the Thought Translator, which rearranges the thought impulses emanating from my brain to fit your thought patterns.

"You, I suppose, are one of the Inner World. A race of puny creatures, living like rodents beneath the Earth. Helpless creatures, unfit for survival on the surface of this green planet, you shall soon be exterminated. Already Zelop, our master, is massing our invisible fleet above the Twin Cones, ready for the assault. We have forged new weapons since Lars and his handful of Moaavites were beaten off five Sun cycles ago. They are weapons with which we will bring the Inner World to ruin and death within hours!"

Starl, unable to move, watched the great, cloudy eyes of the Moaavite leader revolve. There was a cruelty in that alien thought pattern that spoke

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to him in Merikan—a cruelty beyond depth. There would be no mercy from these monsters, nothing but pitiless extermination for the Aleetians.

THARS was speaking again, his huge eyes watching the Merikan with strange intensity.

"One thing we must know, man of the Inner World. Have new weapons been forged, in turn, by your people? Do they await our coming? Speak! Or I shall have Moog tear your arms and legs from your body, one by one!"

Starl's voice was tight-lipped.

"I do not know, Thars. For I am not of the Inner World. I came, with two companions, from far across the interstellar gulf. We crashed on this planet, and I became separated from my companions. But I know not of what you speak, of these people of the Inner World. I am a Merikan, member of the Galactic Patrol. For days now, I have been wandering over this savage land, and I have seen no one. Not till you landed here—"

Thars growled.

"By the twin-headed devil of Baal, you lie!" he exclaimed. "You were sent forth to await our coming. But you shall not get back with the tale—"

Across the room, where a huge televisor took up part of the wall, a green light suddenly appeared. One of the monsters snapped on a switch, and the screen filled with the ugly features of a Moaavite. A staccato whistling sounded in the room.

Thars, facing the screen, nodded a head.

"At once, Zelop!" he answered. "We join you within the hour!"

The Moaavite snapped the switch, and the features of Zelop, master of the invasion, faded. By the televisor Moog turned to Thars, whistling a sharp question.

Thars turned, impatiently, from the table.

"No! We will take him with us to show Zelop, Moog. Put him safely away, and come immediately to the engine room. The rest of you come with me now. We must be ready to join the others within the hour!"

Thars tossed his headpiece on the table and went out. Moog moved over to Starl, unclamped him from the board. For a moment he held the Merikan between powerful fingers, as if undecided as to what to do with him. Then a short whistling broke from his lipless mouth.

Starl still in his hand, the Moaavite fumbled in a huge table drawer. From this he lifted a long, slender piece of steel, about the size and shape of a javelin. In the Moaavite's colossal hand it seemed about the size of a sewing needle.

With a quick, deft stroke, the Moaavite drove the steel rod through the Merikan's left shoulder, imbedding it deeply into the wood behind. Then he left Starl on the table-top, pinned like a house fly, and followed Thars and the others to the engine room.

CHAPTER IX

The Vortex Escape

FOR long minutes Starl lay there, shocked and dazed from the terrible agony. Blood trickled in a [illegible] stream down into his clothing.

With pain-clouded eyes he stared up at the roof of the room. Starl, ace member of the Galactic Fleet, pinned like a laboratory specimen to a board. Left to die, slowly, while twin-headed monsters of an alien world prepared to deal a death blow to the Aleetians—his kind!

The thought sent a burst of anger rippling through his lean frame. He twisted, curling about the slender steel rod in a superhuman effort to free himself. The fierce hurt made him groan.

He relaxed, his teeth setting against the stabbing pain. The Inner World! Realization trickled to him, now, why he had seen no trace of the Aleetian civilization from the air—and during his three-day trek across the plateau. According to Thars, the Aleetians lived below the surface of the Earth, in great caverns. Now he understood why that strange bonging, heralding Seejohn's Vortex, sounded muffled. It emanated from the bowels of the Earth!

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The fingers of his right hand clenched until the nails bit into the palm.

The Vortex! He had to warn Seejohn. He had to get word through to the Inner World—

Suddenly memory of the green signal light glowing on the televisor in the room came to him. It reminded him of a similar signal light on the GE-3, when Morry had got through to tell him the Force was off.

It was a chance—a long chance. If he could only get free before one of the Moaavites returned!

Desperately he grasped the steel rod with his right hand, strove to pull it free. The effort brought nausea pounding at his brain. But he kept tugging, working the rod back and forth.

How long he struggled he did not know. It seemed an eternity of pain. But finally the rod began to loosen, and with a last, cruel wrench that seemed to tear his entire left side, he pulled it free.

He straightened himself with an effort, fighting back waves of numbness that seemed to anesthetize his brain. He wanted to sleep. His emergency pack was still fastened to his back. The steel rod had been driven through a corner of it, and blood had soaked a portion of its contents. But Starl had no thought for the medical supplies in the pack. He had no time. He'd have to endure the pain, keep his eyes open, until he got clear.

The drop from the table to the floor was ten feet. Starl leaped, landed with a jar that, in his weakened condition, shook him dizzy. A fighting will straightened him, sent him stumbling across the room to the big televisor.

He threw on the switch, praying none of the Moaavites would hear the low generator humming, praying he would be given time enough to get through to Seejohn before they found him.

He tried all the top wave-lengths, working the dials frantically. But the visi-screen remained blank. Only once did it light up, framing a pair of Moaavite faces that looked blankly into his own. A sharp staccato whistling rasped at him. Starl snapped off the wave band, swearing softly.

He was about to give up in despair when the screen glowed again, in a frequency far below the levels he had been trying. Starl faced the screen, a gaunt, bloody figure, eyes burning with sudden hope. Maybe this was it!

IT was. The same room he had seen once before came to view again, huge, brilliantly lighted. But this time another face stared at him, instead of Morry's dour features. A man's old, lined face, marked with a stern, cold wisdom. Clad in some loose white garment that covered him from neck to sandaled feet, the man was seated before the televisor. On the wide sleeve of his left arm Starl could see an insignia—a sun with nine encircling planets!

White-haired, the stranger stared at Starl with a strange awareness in his sunken eyes.

Starl wasted no time.

"Aleetian—I am Starl, the Merikan," he said. "Comrade of Morry and Sive. I am a captive aboard a Moaavite war-liner, one of twenty planning to attack the Twin Cones. You must be warned. Tell Seejohn—"

The white-haired man nodded sharply.

"*I* am Seejohn, Merikan. Thank you for your warning. I will attend to the Vortex generators at once. Now, for yourself. If you can, get clear of that ship. I will try to help you. Get clear!"

Starl nodded. Seejohn went off the air and the screen went blank. Starl cut the switch, raced to the door opening on the central runway. Peering out, he could see the huge forms of Moaavites moving in and out of the engine rooms. Practically the entire crew was engaged in the repair work.

The open port through which he had been taken was close to the engine rooms. Starl knew he could not get off the ship that way, without being seen. His gaze moved up the runway to the control room. The observation ports!

Hugging the wall, he made the control room. Fortunately, there was no

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one in the big room. The Merikan breathed easier. He found an open port, up in the nose of the ship, and pulled himself up to it, gritting his teeth against the tearing pain in his side.

The swamp lay thirty feet below him. He sat on the edge of the port opening, staring at the dull gray metal side that bellied out, forming a slide into the water. Then, smiling grimly, he let go.

He slid fifteen feet, dropped the other fifteen, landing feet first. He made a small splash in the swamp, plunging into some ten feet of muddy water.

The Merikan broke surface, stroked his way toward horsetail reeds with his good right hand. A lumbering Moaavite came around the nose of the ship as he reached the reeds, and Starl had to submerge, with only his nose above the stagnant water, until the monster had passed.

Then, keeping to the reeds, he made his way toward firmer ground. Ten minutes later, dragging himself into the shadow of a clump of fern trees under the ridge, his escape was discovered. A series of staccato whistlings brought Moaavites swarming out of the ship. Thars, striding about in the swamp, gave orders.

Starl drew himself deeper into the fern clump. Bloody, bedraggled, one side so numb it almost seemed paralyzed, he wondered how Seejohn was going to help him.

THE Moaavites were all over the ridge and the swamp about the ship, beating and trampling the reeds. A few minutes more, and they'd be searching the fern clump.

Suddenly Starl stiffened. The strange bonging had rolled across the ridge, stilling that search with its imperious order. Deep, sonorous, it was like a warning from the Earth's core. And with it, trailing the muttering echoes of that gong, came the high, thin sighing of tortured winds.

Slowly, then, not a hundred feet from where Starl crouched, the golden-haired girl materialized, like some shimmering goddess, slim and vibrant and unafraid.

For a moment she stood motionless, her gaze sweeping the ridge. Then she called: "Starl! Come, Starl!"

The Merikan straightened, a great awe in him. *She* had come, the Golden Girl! She was risking her life for him! A great fire whipped through his torn frame. She was his kind, this girl, even though three hundred thousand years separated them. His kind!

Sight of Starl, as he emerged from the tree clump, seemed to snap the surprised Moaavites to life. Shrill whistles of rage shattered the stillness as the monsters came rushing toward them in great bounds, spears ready to hurl their electric bolts.

The golden-haired girl smiled reassuringly at Starl as he reached her, lifted her left arm high in the air. And with the gesture the high, thin sighing swept the slope, enclosed them. Starl, stumbling forward, felt the girl's arm about his shoulders a moment before the Vortex gripped them. Then for one split second he experienced excruciating pain, as though he were being torn apart. . . .

CHAPTER X

Strange History

STARL turned, opened his eyes. For a long moment he looked up into the beautiful, smiling face of the girl, not fully understanding. Close to her Morry's dour features were split in a wide grin. Sive was smiling, nodding his head.

He was lying on a comfortable bed, in a luxurious chamber. There was no longer any pain in his shoulder, and moving it, experimentally, he was surprised to feel no twinge, no stiffness.

"What happened?" he said, wonderingly. "One minute we were on a ridge, with Moaavites closing in all around us. Now—"

The girl passed a cool hand over his forehead.

"Seejohn pulled us back in time, Starl. But you were hurt, and the materialization left you unconscious. I had you taken here, and your wound attended." Her gaze darkened at the

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look in his eyes, and she looked away. "You were very brave," she said softly, "to warn Seejohn at the risk of your life. Especially since you had no assurance we were friends. It was our mistake, pulling you down into the Valley of Ancestors with our Force."

She glanced at the computer, smiling.

"Morry thought we *were* enemies, at first. After his materialization in Seejohn's laboratory, and subsequent questioning in the Court of Judgment, he clubbed his attendant unconscious and went back to the laboratory to switch off the Force."

Morry shrugged.

"I didn't know, then, what I know now." He smiled, a little wryly. "Seejohn was all for having me cast into the Pit of Damnation. If it hadn't been for Malia—"

"Malia!" Starl repeated the name, liking the soft sound of it. The girl blushed.

"I must leave you now, with your friends," she said shyly. "You must have much to talk over."

Starl sat up, abruptly.

"The Moaavites, Malia! They were planning to attack the Twin Cones. At any moment—"

The smile faded from the golden-haired girl's eyes.

"Our only hope lies with Seejohn. For five years he has worked on the Vortex. Our preparations have just been completed. If it works, the Moaavites will get the surprise of their lives."

Starl relaxed.

"If there was only some way we their lives."

"A number of Duo-Lectro batteries, brought to position against the Moaavites, could probably stop them," Sive muttered. "Morry and I offered our help to Seejohn in the building of them. But there is no time." The old Merikan's eyes clouded. "Everything depends on the range and power of the Vortex."

The girl's voice was firm.

"You have seen it work, all of you. It plucked Morry and Sive from the Valley of Ancestors. And that with only Seejohn's experimental model. We shall see what will happen when the whole mighty power of the machine set up in the Court of Judgment is turned on."

Sive nodded, somberly. Starl watched the girl leave. Then he turned to his companions, gripping Morry's arm, Sive's shoulder. His voice was a little shaken.

"God, I'm glad to see you again, fellows," he said simply. He shook his head a little. "It still seems a little incredible. I can't—"

"Sit down, Starl," Sive said, kindly. "It's a long story, and I'll tell it to you the way Morry and I heard it, in the Court of Judgment. A long and a strange story."

Starl shrugged, sat on the edge of the bed.

MORRY looked down at him, eyes grave.

"First, Starl, tell us what happened to you. We thought you'd be halfway to Merika by now."

"The generators burned out," Starl answered. He told them of the drop back to Earth, of the landing on the ancient site of Manhattan, of the silent mounds that had once been New York's proud spires, and of the terrible trek across the plateau.

"One of the Moaavite war-liners landed in the marsh," he ended, his voice harsh. "I was seen, and taken prisoner, pinned like some fly to a board." He shrugged, a grudging respect tinging his voice. "Alien and inhuman as these Moaavites are, scientifically they are on a par with us, Sive. That Thought Translator was as ingenious as the sets now being perfected at the Institute. And the drive of their war-liners is of an advanced type. Also, their invisibility seems to work on the polaroid principle of light-wave curvature, with which Olean of the Institute has been doing so much experimenting."

Sive nodded.

"Theirs, also, is a strange saga, Starl. Incredible, perhaps. And yet—" He waved his hands. "But first I will recount the story of the Aleetians, as we heard it from Vosges, head of the Tribunal that rules Aleetia.

"Three hundred thousand years ago,

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when Ordson built the Ordson Ark and plunged with his desperate band of refugees into space, a second group burrowed into the Earth. Their purpose was merely to outlive the Long Cold.

"Hundreds of tunnels all over America led to enormous caverns beneath the Earth's surface. It was presumed that people all over the globe did likewise. But from that day on communication between America and the rest of the world was severed.

"For generations men lived in their caverns, expanding them, improving them. But always their connections with the surface of the Earth, through the long, sealed tunnels, were left open. And once every generation a party of picked men made their way to the surface to see if the ice had receded."

Sive's features were serious with the telling.

"The subterranean dwellers had no inkling of the catastrophe that hit the Solar System. No man saw the cosmic show that resulted with the passage of the dark star that stripped the System, caused the Moon to break up into the rings of Earth.

"Cave-ins, vast earthquakes, took their heavy toll of lives. In places the caverns split wide, plunging entire communities into fiery depths.

"A few — a pitiful few — lived through the catastrophe. But they found their exits blocked, found themselves cut off entirely from the Earth's surface. They did the only thing possible, grimly, with undying hope, they went about rebuilding their cities, ignorant of the change that had taken place in the sky, living like moles in the ground."

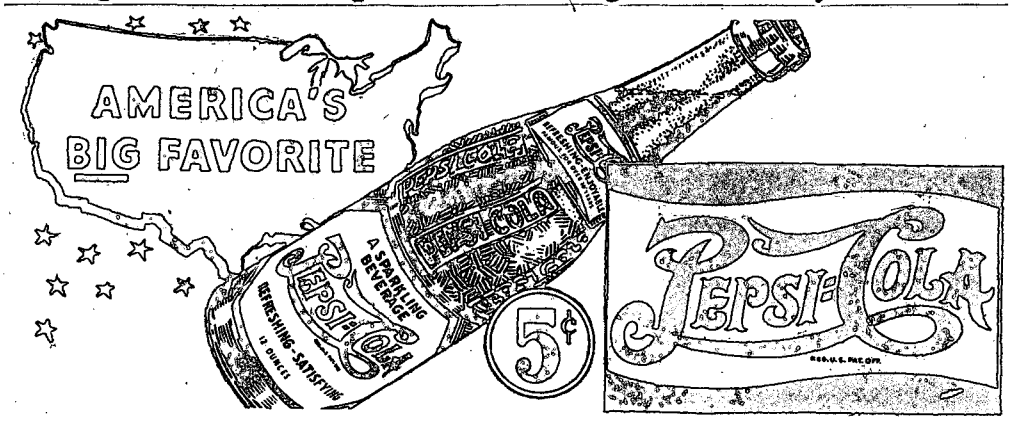
STARL watched Sive's face as the old Merikan paused. The old navigator's eyes held something of the awe he felt for the saga he was unfolding.

"Three hundred thousand years passed before the first Aleetian party made its way to the surface. Three hundred thousand years that saw the Aleetian civilization honeycomb all America in a vast network of underground cities. A civilization ruled by a Tribunal that sits in the vast Court of Judgment, in the capital city of Delawon.

"That first exploring party to reach Outside found a changed world, a savage world. But a world of sun and clean air. And so, following its report, the Tribunal made plans for the rebuilding of its civilization on the surface of the Earth again.

"The Twin Cones, extinct volcanoes in a valley north of that into which we were pulled by Seejohn's Force, were the first connection with the outer surface. Excavation joined the underground city of Verona with the Twin Cones, letting in sunlight for the first time on an Aleetian city.

"That was a scant ten years ago. A few years later the first Moaavites landed in the Valley of Ancestors, as the Aleetians call the valley of the stone faces. The Moaavites built their colossal statue, under the wondering eyes of the Aleetians. They were finally driven off, caught by surprise and outnumbered. They must have been ignorant that any civilized life



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existed on the planet, at the time of their landing. And now—"

Starl straightened, his thoughts still gripped by the saga Sive had unfolded.

"Three hundred thousand years! Then the tales of the Ancient Ones were not just legends after all. This *is* ancient Earth—*our* Earth—and we have a stake in it. We can't let those monstrous beings from an alien planet—"

"Monstrous, perhaps—but not so entirely alien!" Sive muttered. His lips twisted, strangely, at Starl's question.

"WHAT I am going to tell you may well seem incredible, Starl. Morry refuses to accept it. It hangs but on the slender thread of a common protoplasmic makeup, and a Moaavite's strange story. I offer it for what it is worth.

"But first, this measure of explanation. In all our Galactic wanderings, Starl—in the entire annals of the GE through fifty thousand years of recordings—not once has anyone run across life as we know it. There were the crystal beings of Sarius, sentient, capable of motion, of will. Bryant, captain of the GE-65, made a full report of them. His computer, Bantor, died on that planet, his body literally vibrated to fragments by the sonic notes of the crystals.

"That was something alien—something entirely incomprehensible to us. Bryant's observations recorded a bizarre life, but our minds could never comprehend the crystal beings. For our protoplasmic makeup gives us only a facet on Reality, on the Universe—and we can understand, only, that which is also protoplasmic. The Moaavites are protoplasmic. Cruel, hydra-headed, monstrous, yet they are akin to us, basically.

"And so, now, I offer to you the tale told by the Moaavite, captured from that first landing party and questioned by the Tribunal with the Aleetian Thought Translator.

"This is the theory of the Moaavite scientists, concerning their origin. Long ago their star, then a live sun, passed close to another in space. Perhaps there was a partial collision. At any rate, in that manner their planet, with six others, was born. And in due time the Moaavites came to power on their world.

"But their sun, relatively unstable, finally puffed out. The Moaavites, facing death, sought refuge in the Long Sleep—suspended animation. And thus, for countless aeons they drifted through space, entombed on their cloudy planet, circling their dark sun in an endless cycle.

"And then, once again, after the passage of untold ages, their star brushed close to another sun. In the cosmic upheaval that followed, they were wrenched from their parent star, captured by this sun. And here is the fantastic portion of the tale. The Moaavite scientists firmly believe that this is the same sun that gave birth to their planet—that the two suns merely followed a gigantic orbit through the Galaxy that ultimately brought them together again!"

Starl shook his head.

"Wild—incredibly wild, Sive. And yet—"

The knock on the door halted further comment.

An Aleetian attendant entered at their answer.

"Merikans—you are wanted in the Court of Judgment. All the people of the city are to be assembled there. It is the wish of the Tribunal."

Sive nodded.

"We will come at once."

CHAPTER XI

Pit of Damnation

THE Court of Judgment was a vast auditorium. Tiers of seats, rising into galleries, took up three sides of the chamber. These were already occupied by flowing-robed Aleetians. The commanding feature of the hall was a dais of black marble, on which was set a triple throne of gleaming white metal.

Starl and his companions were led before this dais. A lean, purple-robed

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figure, stern-visaged, with wise, kindly eyes sat in the middle seat. At his left sat Malia, no longer clad in the tight-fitting metal sheath, but clothed in a golden gown. On the right sat Seejohn, in his robes of white. The left sleeves of the three on the dais bore the insignia of the Tribunal—the Sun and nine planets!

"Vosges, head of the Tribunal!" Morry whispered to Starl.

The three Merikans halted before the dais. The vast chamber was lighted with a soft pink glow from concealed globes. One entire wall was seatless, bare, gray and sombre, like some metal drape shutting off a stage.

In a corner by this wall a bank of huge generators and strange apparatus glittered.

Slowly Vosges raised an imperious right hand, and a gong struck a low quivering note that silenced the huge chamber. Starl's regard shifted from the grave face of the Tribunal head to Malia. The girl's eyes met his, and the smile she gave him sent the blood pounding at his temples.

Vosges rose. The room was very still now, and Starl could hear the silken rustle of his robes.

"Starl, the Merikan—step forward!"

Starl glanced at his companions. Sive nodded encouragement.

The young space-adventurer stepped forward, halting at the base of the dais.

Vosges' grave face broke into kindly smile.

"I wish to thank you, in behalf of all Aleetia, for your brave warning. And, as a people with a common racehood, I extend our grateful greeting. It is our sincere hope that, with the passing of the grave crisis confronting us, the people of Merika and Aleetia again establish common ties."

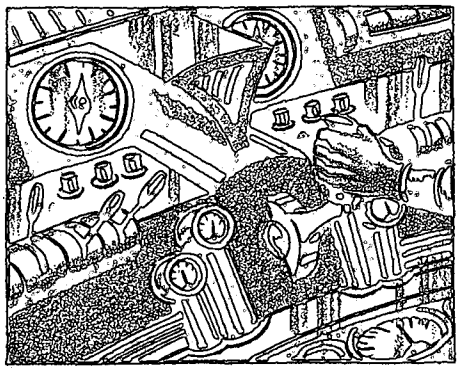
"Thank you, Sire," Starl said in heart-felt tones. "For fifty thousand years it has been the dream of the Galactic Explorers of Merika that one day we would find the home of our birth. That dream has now been realized—"

Panic Rules When Man Loses His Memory and Struggles for Existence in a Strange New World

IN

THE LAND OF TIME TO COME

An Amazing Full-Length Novel of a Civilization That Forgot



By HENRY KUTTNER

Featured in the Next Issue of THRILLING WONDER STORIES

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The signal light on the visi-screen to the left of the Tribunal suddenly glowed red, cutting Starl short with its insistent summons. An Aleetian attendant switched it on.

The screen leaped to life with the anxious features of a green-robed Aleetian.

"Sire!" the man greeted. "The Moaavites are attacking through the Twin Cones, as the Merikan warned. Already a section of Verona is being laid waste by their terrible weapons. There is no time—"

VOSGES lifted an imperious arm, cutting the man short.

"We act at once, Brem. Go back to your post!"

The Aleetian nodded. His face faded from the screen.

A breathless silence hung over the vast chamber. All eyes were on Seejohn as the white-robed scientist slowly descended the stairs leading to the generators by the blank wall.

A hushed sense of expectancy crowded into the vast room. Seejohn moved against the towering generators like a white-haired gnome. His lips taut, he threw the first copper switch.

Starl gasped.

For the entire wall, that had been so metallically gray and dull, had changed, become transparent as glass. Beyond this huge window stretched a smoky, dully glowing cavern of immense proportions—so huge, in fact, it seemed endless in its immensity. Lights, from somewhere up in the roof of the cavern, played over a ruddy, sulphurous glow that flickered out of the enormous pit.

Morry's sharp whisper reached Starl.

"The Pit of Damnation. Some huge crack plumbing the very bowels of the Earth, Starl. It's alive with the molten stuff of the inner core. Into the Pit are cast those whom the Tribunal finds guilty of the highest crime calling for death."

Seejohn was throwing another switch.

And now, floating gently down over that bottomless pit, appeared a huge grid, like some metallic grating, that came to halt above the ruddy glow. It hung there, unsupported by anything visible, partially wreathed by tentacles of sulphurous smoke that spumed up out of that hell pit.

The Court of Judgment was very silent.

Seejohn kept throwing his switches. Now the generators began to hum, deep-throated, with a note of vast power. Lights began to glow in the connecting tubes, swirls and wraiths of colors.

Pointers on power indicators on a central board began to climb steadily. The power hum deepened, filled the huge chamber. And still the pointers climbed.

SEEJOHN was waiting, watching the readings on the dials. Then he bent over a small televisor. Starl, watching fascinatedly, had an idea that this was the range-finder.

The generators were crackling now, sparking dangerously. The power pointers were wavering crazily. Seejohn straightened. He threw a gleaming copper switch that made contact with a sharp, bluish flame.

The power throb seemed to tear at Starl's ear-drums. The great grid seemed to shimmer over the pit. A pink glow enveloped it. And, for what seemed an eternity to the silent watchers, it remained suspended so, with the power generators throbbing at full load.

Then the pinkish glow faded. And on that great, floating grid appeared the twenty Moaavite war-liners, plucked like feathers from their positions of destruction above the Twin Cones of Verona!

For a full ten seconds those huge, gleaming ships hung there above that sulphurous pit. Then Seejohn threw on his last switch, and the grid dropped, with its inhuman load, into the molten bowels of Earth!

Slowly the generators died, one by one. The transparent wall changed again to dull, opaque grayness. Starl rubbed his eyes. He seemed to remember the Pit, and the twenty Moaavite war-liners as something seen in a dream.

Malia was coming down to him, her eyes alive with a great happiness.

"The Vortex, Starl," she said.

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"They'll never dare try again, after this. But if they should—"

Starl grinned, his eyes meeting hers.

"Seejohn will take care of them, Malia," he said.

A MONTH later Starl and Malia, together with a party of Aleetian technicians, said good-by to Morry and Sive. The GE-3 had been repaired, and the two Merikans were leaving for the home planet with several Aleetian envoys to act as good will ambassadors from Earth.

The Sun was bright over the ancient site of Manhattan, and far in the distance the throb of the majestic falls made an undertone.

"We'll miss you, Starl," Sive said, shaking the youngster's hand. "Far out, in some odd corner of space, on Galactic Patrol, we'll think of you and your dreams of ancient Earth. For if you hadn't talked us into landing here—"

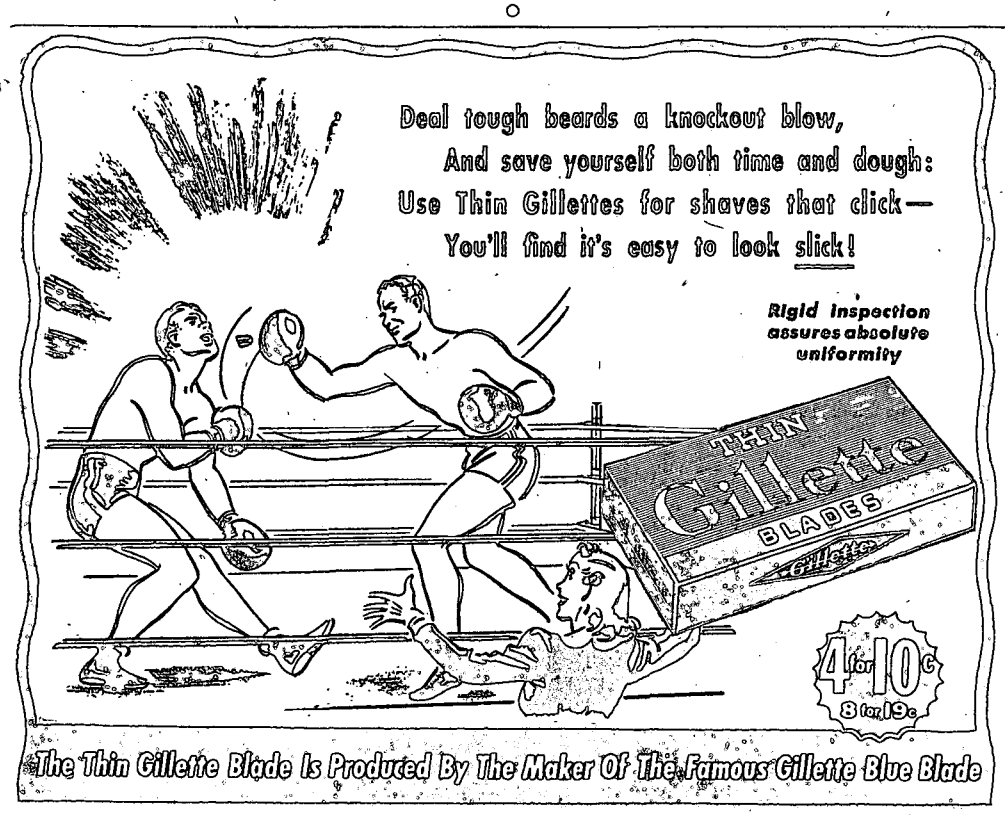
Starl nodded.

"I'll miss being with you, too—a little," he amended, looking aside to Malia. "But there is work here, much work, in the building anew of a civilization on the surface of Earth. And I'll have responsibility—"

"Aye!" Morry nodded, grinning, as he shifted his gaze to the smiling girl. "That you will!" He waved an arm before stepping into the ship behind Sive. "But we'll be seeing you again soon, son."

Starl smiled as he waved good-by. And together, he and Malia watched the trim GE-3 lift itself from that ancient island and shoot like a silver meteor under the rings of Earth, homeward bound. But Starl was content. He had found his real home.

Next Month: A Complete Novel by HENRY KUTTNER, *Plus Short Stories by* EANDO BINDER, CLIFFORD D. SIMAK, MAURICE RENARD, ROBERT MOORE WILLIAMS *and others!*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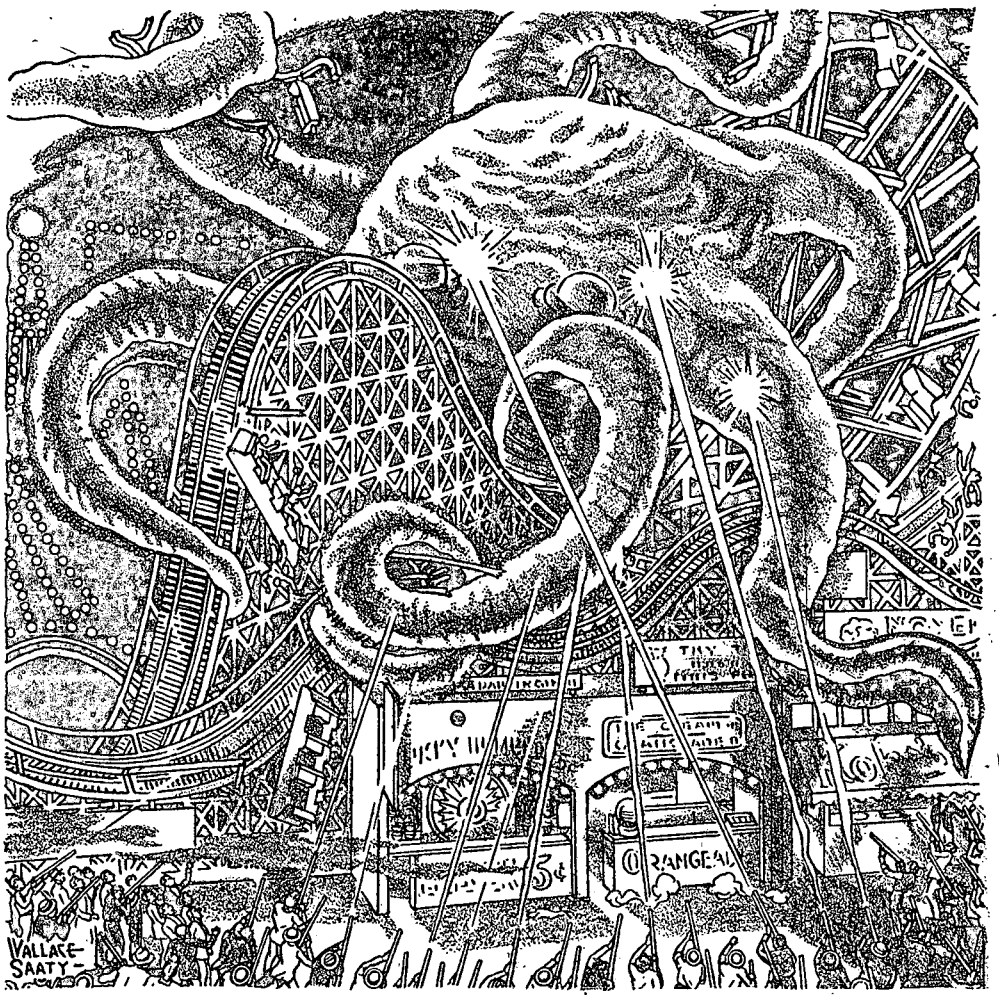
THE INDESTRUCTIBLE

By ROBERT ARTHUR

Author of "Cosmic Stage," "The Tomb of Time," etc.



Wrenching rifles from a shooting gallery, a score of men began pumping bullets at the space-bug

Nothing Known to Man Could Vanquish the Space-Bug from the Outer Void—Until Science Made It Destroy Itself!

PROFESSOR PERCIVAL PENNYMAN was undergoing a ride on the Spin 'Em, and enjoying it thoroughly, when the creature, later to be known as the Indestructible made its first appearance, directly over Coney Island.

The amusement area was thronged by gay hundreds of thousands. And not the least gay of them all was Professor Pennyman. His beard fluttering, his bright blue eyes agleam, he had tried every amusement Coney Island had to offer — roller-coasters, shooting galleries, skee ball, spun sugar candy, hot dogs, and beer.

For Percival Pennyman had a firm conviction that most scientists got too

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little enjoyment from life. He contrived to enjoy himself almost all the time, a highly irregular procedure for the world's most brilliant mind. His capacity for amusing himself was much deplored by his colleagues. Among those who most heartily deplored it was young Lucius Newton, his laboratory assistant, whose disapproving scowl when Percival Pennyman paused, fascinated by the whirling bowl of the Spin 'Em, indicated his feelings.

"But you promised, Professor Pennyman!" Lucius Newton said in anguished tones as Pennyman strode to the ticket window. "You said the Ferris Wheel would be the last! Professor, we've got to get back to the lab. I left the big centrifuge running, and if I don't stop it, it'll throw those bacteria right through the sides and halfway to Chicago!"

"Stuff, boy!" Pennyman exclaimed cheerily. "Two, please."

He took the blue strips a blond charmer handed him and turned. The great wooden bowl of the Spin 'Em was slowing, and a score of disheveled young folk were getting to their feet, laughing merrily.

"You've got to develop an imagination and a capacity for enjoyment, Lucius," he commented. "You'll never be worth a darn as a scientist until you do. I'm very disappointed in you. I don't think I'll let Deena marry you, after all."

Lucius Newton flushed and was silent. Whenever Pennyman wanted to win an argument from him, he had only to threaten not to let Deena, his red-haired, laughing, curvaceously formed daughter marry his assistant. And the sprightly scientist took full advantage of that weapon. Now, the gate opening, he sprinted down the gangplank to be first on the large bump in the center of the thirty-foot saucer, confident that Lucius Newton was at his heels.

The professor squatted down on the raised middle of the Spin 'Em. Lucius Newton crouched beside him, a pained expression on his well-cut features. For if Professor Pennyman looked like a scientist and acted like a schoolboy, Lucius Newton went to the opposite extreme. Looking like a Hollywood heart-throb, he acted always like a scientist.

About them clustered a dozen boys and girls, squealing. The plank was raised, the huge bowl began to spin, first slowly, then faster. Professor Pennyman, grinning, clung to his place as the first of the youngsters slid off the raised center and were thrown by centrifugal force out and up to the padded outer rim.

The principle of the Spin 'Em was simple. The thirty-foot bowl of polished wood revolved at a high rate of speed. The object was to remain seated on the large bump in the center. But there was nothing to hold on to, and inevitably all would lose their balance, slide down into the bowl and be thrown upward to the leather-padded rim. There, pressed out flat and quite helpless, they would lie in grotesque postures until the slowing of the bowl, and the slackening of centrifugal force, released them.

Presently, snatched up by invisible fingers of force, both men were flung out to the rim. The bowl continued spinning, the centrifugal force rendering them helpless.

Pennyman ended up flat on his back, his head cushioned. But Newton got a bad bump and, as he rubbed his head ruefully, rage at Pennyman's childishness burned in him. The scientist chortled at his assistant's discomfiture.

"Now you know how helpless the bugs in your centrifuge feel, Lucius!" he called. "Calculate our angular momentum for me! Take fifteen feet for the radius and—"

Then he broke off abruptly. Not because of Lucius Newton's sour look, but because his gaze had just encountered the Indestructible descending toward Coney Island.

THERE were many descriptions of the Indestructible, or space-bug, as it was first called, the next day. A million, in fact, because there were a million witnesses. And Percival Pennyman, pinned out flat in the Spin 'Em and getting only kaleidoscopic glimpses each time he went around, probably grasped more in those brief glimpses than anyone else of the mil-

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lion. Because the operator of the Spin 'Em, gaping, quite forgot his job. He let the big saucer continue to spin, and Pennyman, helpless, lay there and concentrated on looking.

"Like a great big octopus, all glowing as if it was a firefly," was one description the next day. Still another called it "a big ball of cold fire, with flames shooting out."

But this last was highly inaccurate, though to an excited imagination the palely glowing creature, thrusting out luminous pseudopods, might have so appeared.

The truth, as Percival Pennyman quickly perceived, was that the space-bug was capable of many forms, but basically was a great, egg-shaped blob some eighty feet through the small diameter, suffused by a cold, yellow-orange light. It made a fine show in the heavens as it hovered five hundred feet above Coney Island. The throngs, faces turned upward, at first took it for some new type of fireworks attraction. But after only a moment it began to settle.

Its downward course brought it toward the boardwalk not a hundred yards north of the Spin 'Em, where Professor Pennyman was watching with avid interest. At a height of some two hundred feet it paused. Flattening out, it projected half a dozen fifty-foot "arms" from equally spaced points about its circumference. It hung thus a few seconds, making a spectacular effect as its glowing pseudopods writhed and coiled.

Directly beneath it was a giant roller-coaster. Just beyond, a huge Ferris Wheel was turning, swings crowded.

Then one dangling arm lengthened. A three-car train crawled over the top of the first rise in the roller coaster and started downward on its breath-taking plunge. Halfway down, the tentacle caught the rearmost car.

As lightly as a child's toy the train rose into the air. The forward cars dropped and swung pendulum-like, the screams of the occupants cutting sharp and clear through the noises of the crowd. The safety bars that locked the riders in held some, but many fell free, and still screaming, plunged downward into the framework of girders beneath.

A second train passed beneath the dangling first, unharmed. Another pseudopod reached out, coiled about the Ferris Wheel, contracted. The great wheel tilted outward, fell, was caught halfway to the ground when the tentacle tightened and held it there. Panic-stricken riders clung desperately to the swings, and, unable to maintain their holds, plummeted to the earth.

As if testing its strength against these creations of man, and perhaps thereby gauging any opposition it might encounter, the space-bug dropped a third tentacle to the roller coaster tracks and pulled. With a vast rending, metal girders gave way. A crowded train of cars, just shooting down toward the spot, met emptiness where the tracks should have been. For a moment it hurtled onward under its momentum. Then it curved downward and plunged into nothingness.

FOR a few moments then, nothing more happened. The space-bug hung there, as if contemplating the damage it had done. Those moments enabled a score of men to make a futile gesture. Wrenching rifles from the counter of the nearest shooting gallery, they began pumping .22s into the luminous bulk overhead, with no effect whatever.

Then the Coast Guard rocket-plane came racing through the night, in response to an emergency call. A slender, fish-shaped creation with stubby wings, its pontoons retracted, it flashed into view and made one great circle as the pilot sized up the situation. It came out of the turn at a thousand feet and dived straight for the visitant.

Half a mile distant, the rocket-plane's two wing cannon began barking. Their muzzle flare was a steady white flickering as six hundred explosive two-inch shells a minute screamed toward the space-bug. The shells penetrated slightly into the mass above and burst.

But the creature remained undisturbed, despite the barrage. The pilot

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of the Coast Guard plane pulled out of his dive to circle and come back. And at that instant the space-bug moved.

So swiftly the eye could scarcely follow, it raced upward, still clinging to the Ferris Wheel, the roller-coaster cars, and the section of track. Its rise took it directly into the path of the zooming plane. The pilot flung himself over on his back, but never had a chance to avoid the collision.

The rocket-plane struck the glowing mass head on, then crumpled. The space-bug was thrown backward a couple of feet. The plane, a ball of metal wreckage, fell, to crash down on a section of bathhouses a quarter mile away.

With this, the space-bug seemed to tire of its sport. It dropped the Ferris Wheel and its other booty to the ground. Withdrawing its extended tentacles and resuming its original egg-shape, it raced off to the northeast, becoming a pinpoint of light that vanished.

At last the proprietor of the Spin 'Em remembered his job. The bowl came to a stop, and Professor Pennyman and Lucius Newton were able to escape, dizzily, to follow the frightened throngs that were stampeding back to their homes via the swiftly zipping underground escawalks that had replaced surface transportation since the war of 1990.

PROFESSOR PENNYMAN, seated at his untidy desk in one corner of his laboratory, was playing absently with a dime-store puzzle when Lucius Newton strode agitatedly in next morning, the daily papers under his arm.

Trailing Lucius was lovely Deena Pennyman, smartly dressed in a close-fitting sports outfit.

"Professor!" Lucius Newton blurted. "Have you seen the morning papers? I suppose you haven't even looked at them!" His tone was scathing.

Professor Pennyman glanced up brightly.

"Hello, Lucius," he chirped. "Good morning, Deena. Why is your boy friend so excited?"

"I'm afraid he's mad at you, Dad," Deena admitted, giving him an affectionate peck on the forehead. "That creature you saw last night—after it left Coney, acted very naughtily. And Lucius is angry at you now because it's just occurred to him that you might have been hurt last evening. Whereas, if you'd stayed in your lab where you belong, instead of gallivanting around Coney Island, you'd have been in no danger."

Lucius Newton flung the black-headlined papers onto the desk.

"Look, Professor!" he commanded grimly.

Professor Pennyman sighed and held out his puzzle.

"All right, Lucius," he agreed. "I'll read the papers if you'll work this puzzle. You see, there are four balls in the middle of the box. The idea is to get them into four holes in the corners, and—"

"You spin the box, and that puts them in the holes," Lucius interrupted him. "Professor Pennyman—"

Pennyman winked at his comely daughter. There was a secret pact between them to put Lucius Newton at a disadvantage whenever possible, in an effort to break down his stiffness. Deena hoped that when this happened, he might acquire a few romantic ideas. She liked him. She liked his square-cut handsomeness. She knew he loved her. But unless he could break down and give a little evidence of the fact soon—well, she might call the engagement off.

But Professor Pennyman's impish mood died away as he scanned the papers.

"Mmm," he muttered. "After he left us last night, our luminous friend dropped over to pay London a visit, it seems. Picked up the Nelson Monument there, and dropped it on the House of Lords. Was ripping up a few miles of high tension wires when a squadron of the British rocket-plane fleet attacked it. The Fleet was wiped out in the same way the Coast Guard plane was destroyed."

"Then," Lucius informed him, "the creature dashed out a thousand miles into space to intercept a freighter coming in from the Lunar mines. It swam — or whatever it does to move

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about—around it for awhile, and the skipper tried to drive it off with demolition rockets. Three hits didn't faze the thing."

"Mmm, yes," Professor Pennyman agreed. "It wrapped a tentacle around the nose of the ship and pulled her twelve points off her course. Then it let go, and the skipper, in desperation, gave it one of the new Keebler atomic bombs. Dangerous, that. Suppose he'd missed, and the bomb had hit an Earth city?"

"But he didn't miss, Dad," Deena put in. "And that's the interesting point. He smacked the space-bug square in the tummy — if it has a tummy—"

"And the bomb went off, of course," Lucius finished. "Then—"

"Then, apparently," Professor Pennyman completed the narration for himself, "the most amazing thing happened."

"Nothing whatever happened!" Lucius scowled.

"That was the amazing thing," Pennyman chuckled, his beard waggling. "When a Keebler goes off, everything that's possible should happen. Theoretically, nothing living or man-created can exist after contact with an atomic bomb. But our visitor merely swallowed it and went about its business of sabotage. But the point is—"

"The point is, Dad," Deena put in, "that the thing you saw last night is a dangerous hunk of stuff. It eats explosive bullets, and, after swallowing a Keebler, licks its lips. It seems to be positively indestructible."

"Nothing living is indestructible." Lucius announced flatly.

Professor Pennyman blinked.

"Why not?" he asked.

"*Nothing* is indestructible," Lucius Newton insisted uncertainly. "Not even the Universe itself."

"Ah!" Pennyman's beard waggled again. "Suppose the Earth ran up against a creature that, although it might be destroyed if it fell into the Sun, or was smashed between colliding planets, *is indestructible* by man? The space-bug is such a creature—it cannot be destroyed by man."

The two young people gaped at him in astonishment.

LUCIUS NEWTON'S face was a study in manful effort as he tried to adjust himself to a new idea.

"Professor," he said at last, "it—it's pretty hard for me to imagine. I confess, on the evidence, this creature is awfully tough. But that anything of flesh and blood is indestructible—"

"I know it's hard for you to imagine, Lucius," Percival Pennyman told him with a touch of impatience. "That's your whole trouble. You're a fine scientist, but you can't imagine. Who said anything about flesh and blood?"

"But — but — " his assistant stammered—"all living things—"

"Are flesh and blood?" Pennyman demanded wickedly. "What about plants? What about trees? However, we understand what you mean. There is no essential necessity for life to confine itself to structures created from protoplasm. I think it's quite obvious our visitor isn't flesh and blood, at least in any of the forms with which we are acquainted."

"But then what is he?" Deena asked.

"There," Percival Pennyman admitted, running his fingers through his beard, "*my* imagination breaks down. I don't know. Perhaps it's built up out of something that is half matter and half force-field.

"I've formed a few theories that do not seem to me unlikely. The first is that our space-bug, as it's being called, obviously comes from some other Universe, perhaps from a perfectly cold, airless world which is not greatly different from space itself as an environment.

"Obviously, also, it can travel in space. This can not be done by muscular means. So its motive power, as well as its nourishment, must lie in the realms of force. I postulate that it can absorb force in the form of light, atomic explosions such as it was treated to by the Keebler, gravitational, electric, and other similar forces.

"To my mind, there is only one likely way in which it can cruise through space as it does—by making use of, and warping, the force-fields that permeate the whole Universe. These are electric and gravitational in nature. We are beginning to be able

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to affect them by means of machinery. I think our space-bug simply affects them within its own body, by voluntary means unfathomable to us. The light which it gives off is nothing more or less than the waste product of the forces on which it subsists."

The twinkle came back into Pennyman's eyes as he watched the changing expressions of the other two.

"Wowie, Dad!" his daughter exclaimed at last, in sheer admiration. "Your imagination has outdone itself this time. I'd hate to hear what some of your colleagues would say if they'd heard you. They'd razz you until you thought you were riding on a buzz-saw."

Lucius Newton scowled, his strong face thoughtful.

"It's difficult to conceive, even though not impossible, Professor Pennyman," he said stubbornly. "I still can't bring myself to believe that any creature, even of a life-form unknown to us, can be—"

"Well, I may be wrong," Pennyman agreed, with new briskness. "We'll soon see. Just before you came in, Admiral Wortman of the Space Battle Fleet contacted me. One thing the papers didn't get is that our space-bug tangled with a rocket destroyer on the way to the freighter's aid last night. It wrapped itself around the craft several times and squeezed, crushing it like an egg. The crew was lost. So the Navy is out for action, and I've been invited to go along, with some others, as scientific observers. As my assistant and secretary, you're both going, too."

"Good!" Deena cried. "I always liked sailors. They're so romantic. If anybody can squench Mr. Indestructible, the Navy can."

From the corner of her eye she looked at Lucius Newton. But that handsome young man only scowled darkly and said nothing.

THEY took off, shortly after noon, in the forefront of a battle squadron of half a dozen ships from the Rocket Navy. The flagship, *Prometheus,* carried the scientific and journalistic observers. Most of them were in the main observation tower amidships. But Pennyman, his daughter, and Newton occupied the bridge with Admiral Wortman.

Besides the three-thousand-foot flagship, there were two heavy cruisers, one a special E-X experimental job, in which has just been mounted a super-Jarman heat inductor gun that could bring a battle rocket to a dull red glow from twelve miles in seventeen minutes.

There were also two super-speed rams, equipped with detachable noses. These, with a rigidity of frame and an acceleration speed unprecedented, were what their name implied—vessels specially built for ramming in space combat.

Led by the fast rams, the squadron blasted off from Washington shortly past noon and headed westward toward the Australias, where the space-bug was then reported.

Two hours' flight in the high stratosphere took them across the Pacific, and then they sighted their prey.

Glowing with brilliance in the blackness of space, the space-bug hurtled toward them from the west, as if sensing their hostile intentions. Quick observation told them that its speed approximated their own. If it had nothing in reserve, then, the rams should be able to catch it.

Pursuit, however, was not necessary. The space-bug brought the fight to them. It raced toward the nearest cruiser, which had taken the forefront of the battle line.

Watching, the observers plainly saw three rockets and two Keeblers strike almost simultaneously. For an instant the creature hesitated in mid-flight as the Keeblers flared up. Then it seemed to suck the explosions into itself and, glowing with a new brilliance, closed up the gap between itself and the cruiser.

"We're only feeding it," Professor Pennyman remarked, with deep interest, as the cruiser swerved and avoided the rush of the oncoming space-bug. "It's relishing the Keeblers like a kid on a picnic relishes hot dogs. Now let's see how it likes the Jarman."

With the cruiser out of the battle line, the fast E-X ship was coming up.

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There was no visible sign that the Jarman induction gun had been brought into action, except the thermostatic telltale on the instrument panel. Focused on the space-bug, and until now registering in the neighborhood of a hundred degrees absolute, it suddenly spurted upward.

Only for an instant, however. Then the needle fell back and remained where it had been, wavering slightly.

"We're pouring everything we've got into it, Admiral," reported the captain of the E-X ship through the communivisor. "We've a hundred and seven per cent overload on the generators, and we've by-passed all fuses. The creature ought to be vaporizing now—and it seems to like it!"

The last was true. The space-bug had paused in its flight. Like an animal basking in the sun it floated in space, a great egg-shaped lump, sucking up the short-waves that were flooding it. But only for a moment. Then, purposefully, it moved toward the E-X rocket.

A worried frown on his forehead, Admiral Wortman barked orders taking the ship out of the action, and instructing the rams to move up. The order was easier to give than to execute, for the space-bug had seemingly set itself to destroy the E-X craft, and though it was fleeing on a tangential course, the luminous visitor was overhauling it from behind.

They were well out into space now, and the fight was pulling away from the flagship. The heavy battle wagon had no chance of overtaking the rams that were zipping up to pass between the space-bug and the E-X, so they cut power and tuned on the visascanner.

ON the screen they saw the Number One ram circle the E-X and, in pursuance of orders, "attempt a head-on collision with the bug." There was no attempt to avoid the meeting, and the ram was still picking up speed when they met.

There was dead silence on the bridge of the flagship as five pairs of eyes watched the visascreen. With held breath all saw the false nose of the ram crumple, saw the glowing space-bug seem to flatten about the ram-nose as if plastered there.

But the ram was built for this business. She had a spine that would have supported two cruisers. She shuddered, but she did not crack and she did not stop. After the merest hesitation she went on, thrown onto a new course by the impact, but visibly picking up speed aagin.

"Admiral!" It was the voice of the captain of the ram, barely audible, coming in on the report circuit. "All controls — smashed — by impact. Acceleration jammed — at twenty-one point two—gravities. Can't kill our Benson spark and—"

The voice died away, gasping out into nothingness, though the circuit still hummed.

"Good God!" Admiral Wortman muttered, eyes strained to the scene on the screen. "Twenty-one gravities! They must be jelly by now!"

"But the space-bug is still caught!" Deena whispered. "Look, Dad! The acceleration is keeping it pinned to the nose of the ram. It can't recover itself enough to get loose. It may be indestructible—but it has certain limitations."

It was true. The space creature lay over the damaged nose of the runaway ram like an empty sack plastered to the radiator of an old-time automobile. Held there by the constant speed increase of twenty-one gravities a second, it was temporarily helpless.

"And the ram," Admiral Wortman remarked with grim satisfaction, "is going to crash somewhere in India!"

The helpless ram hurtled downward past them. It would take only seconds to reach the ground, and they raced downward after it toward the estimated point of contact.

They were a thousand miles up when the doomed craft plunged into a rocky region near the foot of Mount Everest. Even at that distance they could see dust rise from the crash.

Admiral Wortman let out a long-drawn breath, and they knew he was thinking of the crew of the lost ship.

"At least," he said at last, "we've finished the thing off. Nothing could live through that."

"I'm afraid you're wrong," Percival Pennyman sighed. "He's not as bright

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as he was, and he's not feeling as chipper, either. But there he is."

There was stunned silence on the bridge as the observers saw the pale dot of light that rose slowly out of the dust cloud and, refusing to try further battle, sped away eastward.

Only Lucius Newton spoke.

"Indestructible!" he choked. *"Indestructible!"*

NEWTON paced back and forth, stopping occasionally to glower at Pennyman. The professor was playing idly with a puzzle, and whistling a monotonous tune.

Two weeks had passed since the job of getting rid of the indestructible space-bug had been placed squarely in the laps of the world's scientists, and Lucius Newton had taken the problem as a personal challenge. His incredulity that anything living could be, to all intents and purposes, immune to the worst man could do had passed over into a grim determination to rid the world of the thing, somehow. For Deena Pennyman, in despair at last, had told him that she had kept putting off marrying him because his lack of imagination discouraged her, and unless he developed some soon, she was going to break the engagement.

If he could prove her wrong, by doing something like figuring out a way to rout the space-bug, which on the face of it was certainly going to take imagination on someone's part, she'd reconsider, but—

She'd let it go at that. But her inference had been clear. And ever since, Lucius had wrestled with the problem in grim intensity.

Now he stopped behind Pennyman. The professor was amusing himself by spinning his toy puzzle, making the four balls rush out to their places in the corners.

"Professor," Lucius groaned, "Admiral Wortman and the Secretary of War are calling in half an hour. What are you going to tell them?"

"Me?" Pennyman chirped. "Boy, I have nothing to tell them. I'm getting old. My mind isn't as agile as it used to be. I've turned the job over to you. What're *you* going to tell them?"

"I DON'T know," the younger man gritted. "Everything's been tried. Four Navy destroyers got it trapped in a mile-square net of steel cable yesterday. But it just pushed tentacles through the spaces and ripped the net to pieces. So far it's been mostly mischievous, ripping up bridges, knocking down buildings, interfering with air traffic, as if it was just showing us how feeble we are to stop it.

"But trade is at a standstill, all rocket trips have been canceled, the world is blacked-out every night because lighted cities seem to attract it, and the death toll is mounting steadily. It isn't infinite in its powers, of course. I estimate that it can put out about as much power as a Navy cruiser, and has a total mass, whatever it may be composed of, equal to that of a destroyer.

"But it *is* invulnerable to attack with any weapons we own, and any trap that might hold it is unfeasible. The only time we've even come close to having it at a disadvantage was when it butted that Navy ram head on, and then was held there by its own inertia as the ram picked up speed. Apparently a twenty-fold increase in its relative mass was too much for it to cope with.

"That doesn't help us much, though. The only thing I've been able to think of is to snag it on the bow of a battleship and plunge the ship into the Sun at a constantly increasing speed. But that won't work, because in the first place it's too smart to get caught that way again, and in the second, no ship could accelerate for even a fraction of that distance. The fuel wouldn't last. So that's out. And so am I," Newton Lucius concluded with deep moodiness.

"I think," Percival Pennyman proposed cheerfully, "we ought to take another trip to Coney Island. The sea air would clear our brains, and a ride or two—"

"That silly spinning saucer, which you seem so fond of, would addle my wits completely," Lucius Newton told him grimly. "No, thanks. I feel dizzy enough as it is now, without being whirled around helter skelter. *And*

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give me that puzzle!" he finished with the sudden, bitter intensity of vast exasperation. "I threw it away once. This time it goes for good!"

He snatched up the puzzle and strode to the window, just as Deena entered.

"Dad," she reported, "Admiral Wortman and Secretary Miller are here. They're anxious to know if you've had any ideas yet."

"Only one," Percival Pennyman grinned, with a sidelong look at his assistant who, about to hurl the tiny puzzle out the window, had suddenly paused and was studying it intently.

"Oh, good!" Deena exclaimed. "What, Dad?"

"That Lucius Newton's imagination has developed," her father answered, obscurely.

"I wish I could believe you, Dad," the girl sighed, with a quick glance at the young man, who was just turning around, a blank look on his features.

"Yes!" Newton roared. "Your father is right!" His face was alight, with a look Deena had never seen there before. "Send them in, because I want to talk to them! I want a battleship, and I want a lot of things done to it in a hurry! And if they want to get rid of the space-bug, they'll get what I want. So move, girl!"

Deena gasped, a gasp that contained equal parts of indignation, astonishment, and startled joy, and fled.

THE battleship control cabin into which Lucius Newton, Percival Pennyman, Deena, and Admiral Wortman were crowded in was some forty feet across, and spherical. It carried only the barest minimum of instruments necessary for operating the ship in space, having been towed there by half a dozen tugs. It was a skeleton ship.

Newton sat before such controls as there were, his brow furrowed with concentration. Admiral Wortman watched him worriedly, though Deena and Professor Pennyman seemed quite cheerful.

"Well," the admiral muttered gloomily, "I suppose you still won't tell us what you plan, Newton, but I certainly wish I knew. I had the devil's own time, getting a battleship not even off the ways from the Navy Department, and the alterations you wanted. Believe me, madness was the least they accused me of when I gave them the specifications. If your scheme doesn't work, my career in the Navy is over, and I can just hustle for a job as captain on a fertilizer scow."

"It'll work," Lucius Newton rasped, self-confidence in his voice. "Is Indestructible after us yet?"

"Coming up from the rear," Admiral Wortman reported, glancing at the visascanner. But I don't understand it. A battleship with absolutely no weapons — a control cabin suspended in oil at the center of gravity, and all controls radio-operated—no crew—every interior fitting stripped out—a stress factor of twenty-normal added all through the ship—an observation window a hundred feet across set into the bow, with glass that will go if a child leans against it—what does it all mean?"

He shook his head as his voice trailed off. Lucius Newton swung their blast control to full on, and leaned back.

"You'll see," he commented. "Watch the screen."

They were operating with an accessory visa-transmitter about three miles off their port, magnetically held. The screen showed them their own ship moving slowly across its surface, a fan of blue radiance indicating her blast exhaust, and a great circle of bright illumination which was the peculiar observation window, set into the ship just behind her forward tubes, which the admiral had mentioned.

The battleship, rebuilt before finished at Lucius Newton's demand, was speeding in the general direction of Saturn's orbit, though well clear of any planet. Now, watching, they saw the tiny yellow dot that was overhauling them from behind—the space-bug coming to the attack.

In a few moments it was swooping past them, circling as if examining the battle wagon.

"It's going to attack," Wortman grumbled. "Going to try ramming us. Knows we can't harm it any."

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"It's attracted to the observation window," Lucius Newton informed him coldly. "Our space-bug is slightly phototropic, attracted by lights. When it rams us, it'll aim for the window. Then you watch."

"It'll come busting right into us," Deena commented. "Is that—"

She broke off. The screen showed the egg-shaped spot of light racing toward them at ever-increasing speed from a point a few degrees off their nose. As Lucius had predicted, the space-bug was going to fling itself against the hundred-foot observation window.

On the screen, ship and space-bug met. And the Indestructible vanished!

"He's plunged right into us!" Admiral Wortman grunted. "Knocked us a point off course. He's brought up at the bottom of that hold you had built behind the window, Newton—three hundred feet deep, with a parabolic curve to the walls, and as smooth as a mirror. But he won't stay there. In a second he'll back out and then—"

"Hah!" Lucius Newton snorted contemptuously.

His hand flashed to the controls. He slapped down one lever, then another. Admiral Wortman gurgled in amazement. On the screen, blue flame spurted from the nose of the ship, from a right-angle course-change vent. Simultaneously a rear course-change vent blasted off, on the opposite side of the ship. Instantly the great battleship spun on her axis. The opposed blasts, one at each end, increased in violence. The spin of the ship became a whirl, dizzying to watch, that blended into a gray blur ringed by blue flame.

IN a maneuver that no ship was designed to stand, that all control boards were built to prevent from occurring by accident, Lucius Newton had transformed them into a three-thousand foot pinwheel whirling madly in space!

In the control room, suspended as it was in oil at the center of gravity, they felt no motion. The ship was spinning about them. But the oil was heating from friction, and that heat would take only seconds to become unbearable.

"Brace yourselves!" Lucius barked. "Here we go!"

He jabbed home a last switch. Compressed air screamed. A port flew open, an air blast blew the independent control cabin out of the ship at right angles to the plane of spin. Ten seconds later they were a mile away. Half an hour later, picked up by the *Prometheus,* which had followed on orders, they stood on the bridge and watched the deserted battleship spin dizzily away toward the outer reaches of the Universe.

"But I don't understand," Admiral Wortman was still muttering, as they watched the screen, on which vanishing craft was only a whirling blur outlined by blast flame. "The space-bug is still on her. He hasn't emerged."

"He's down in that specially built hold," Lucius Newton chuckled, relaxed now. "He's squashed flat against those polished parabolic walls by centrifugal force that would spread you or me out into a film an atom thick. His one weakness I could find was an inability to move when sufficiently held down by inertia. His mass is terrific. So is his power, of course. But to utilize it, he has to be on balance, so to speak. And where he is now he can never get back on balance.

"Figure it out. Say he's a thousand feet from the axis of the ship. She's spinning free in the vacuum of space at about six hundred r.p.m. This puts his actual velocity of movement in the neighborhood of twelve miles a second *in a constantly changing direction!* It wouldn't bother him in a straight line. It's the constant directional change, with its resultant of centrifugal force, that has him buffaloed. He can't fight it. He's pinned down like a fly on a board, just as you'd be if you took a ride on the Spin 'Em at Coney Island, where I've spent a lot of time lately—thanks to Professor Pennyman!

"That's why the ship was reenforced—to stand the incredible stresses that are developing. It'll hold a long time, and as long as it does, Mr. Indestructible is a prisoner. Because even after the blast fuel is used up, the rocket will spin in space forever as it travels away from the Earth. That's how long our durable friend should be a pris-

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oner. And it's a long time!"

"Whew!" Admiral Wortman gasped, when he had digested this. "A prisoner of his own inertia, captive to centrifugal force, penned up and shipped off to the ends of the Universe. You couldn't kill him—so you deported him!"

"Exactly," Lucius Newton agreed. "I could have plunged him into the Sun, but how do I know he wouldn't have survived even that? This way, if he ever does get loose, he'll be so many light years away Earth can forget about him for good. And now that we're rid of him, I've another job to do."

He turned, and without any preliminary, grabbed Deena.

"You've put me off long enough, Deena!" he exclaimed. "And I'm tired of it. We'll be married this afternoon in New York. And right now I'm going to do something I've been imagining myself doing for a long time."

Giving her no chance to protest, or slip from his embrace, he kissed her. Firmly. Then again. And again. Percival Pennyman chuckled, and led a wide-eyed Admiral Wortman to the nearest door.

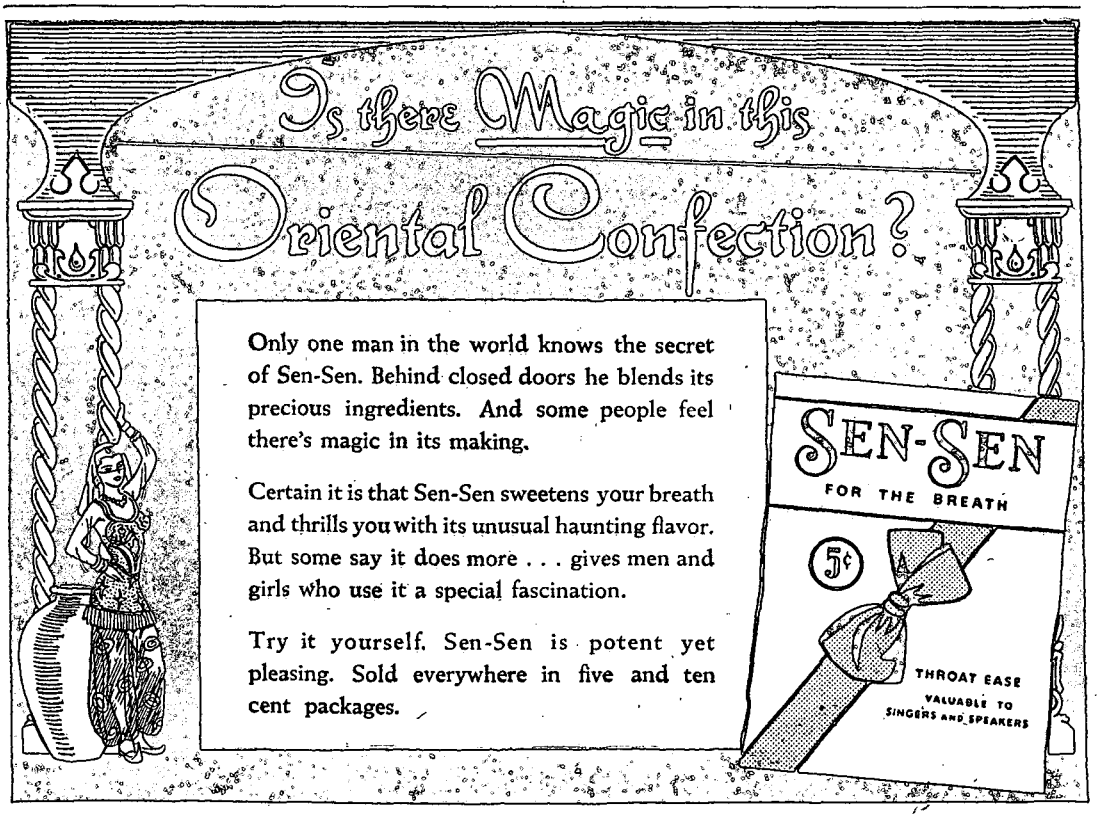
"That boy will go far!" Admiral Wortman was saying heartily as they exited. "He has a grand imagination! How he ever came to think of the scheme he did is beyond me."

"It wasn't easy," Professor Pennyman chuckled, perhaps not entirely clearly. "But it will give him a self-confidence that's going to be the making of him. That's my recipe for a scientist. Brains plus imagination. And Lucius has 'em both—now."

He winked over his shoulder at his daughter, who was still firmly clasped in Lucius Newton's arms, and she winked back.

"Imagination!" she sighed blissfully to herself, as Lucius' arms tightened again. "I'll say he has! And not so darned scientific, either!"

Next Issue: MYSTERY WORLD, a Story by EANDO BINDER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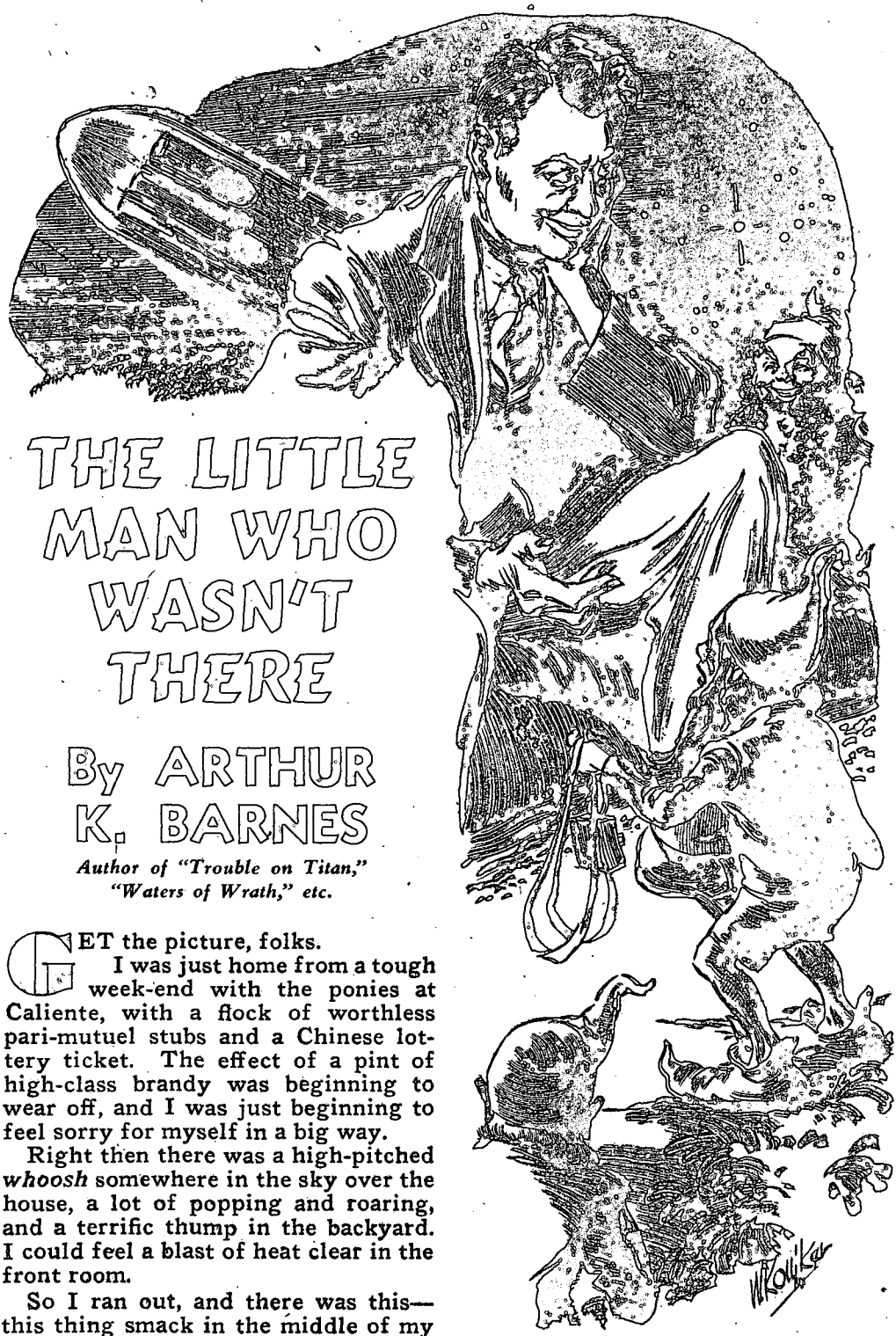
James Littleman Thought His Powers of Invisibility Were a Visible Asset—but They Made His Profits Disappear!



THE LITTLE MAN WHO WASN'T THERE

By ARTHUR K. BARNES

Author of "Trouble on Titan," "Waters of Wrath," etc.

GET the picture, folks.

I was just home from a tough week-end with the ponies at Caliente, with a flock of worthless pari-mutuel stubs and a Chinese lottery ticket. The effect of a pint of high-class brandy was beginning to wear off, and I was just beginning to feel sorry for myself in a big way.

Right then there was a high-pitched *whoosh* somewhere in the sky over the house, a lot of popping and roaring, and a terrific thump in the backyard. I could feel a blast of heat clear in the front room.

So I ran out, and there was this—this thing smack in the middle of my petunia bed. The petunias were

He brought out a funny looking gadget

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burned to a crisp, and so was I! At first I thought the Nazis had come, and this was a time bomb or a dud shell. But then I seen it wasn't either of those. It was reddish-colored, and shaped like an egg.

But what an egg! It was about four feet high and nearly five feet from end to end. And what made me sure it wasn't a bomb was the fact that there were windows in it. Also, a door.

The whole thing was so hot I couldn't approach it at first, but pretty soon it cooled off. Then the door opened, and a little green man came out. All right, all right; never mind the cracks. It *was* a little man, all dressed in green. He was about two feet tall.

I shut my eyes and shook my head vigorously, which I've found to be excellent treatment for little men who come out of bottles. But he didn't go away. Just stood there looking up at me. Pretty soon six more little men came out. Aha, I figured, it's the seven dwarfs. But where's Snow White?

Pretty soon a whole lot of jumbled thoughts just popped into my head from nowhere, as if somebody was talking inside my brain. I began to have doubts about whether that brandy had been so high class after all. I looked around, hoping someone would come along and tell me I wasn't having the deetees. But no soap.

I live in one of them broken-down southern California subdivisions that petered out before it really got started. My cottage is alone at the end of a beautifully paved street, with lightless lamp posts and grass pushing through the cracked sidewalk. There was nobody inside a city block to see what was going on.

All of a sudden I caught on. The little guy was talking, in a queer, piping gabble. The syllables didn't sound like anything I ever heard, but somehow I understood every word. Sure; it was mental telepathy!

He told me a weird story about how the egg-shaped thing was a space ship, and how they'd come from billions of miles away through interstellar space. He pointed out a star in the southeast and said that was his home. Then he said they were getting low on fuel, and chose to land on Earth because its physical conditions were pretty much like those on their home planet. They were friendly, and didn't want to stay much longer than it would take to replenish their fuel supply, and would I please happen to have some of the stuff, which was very rare where they come from, on hand?

I was dumfounded, naturally. But being very intelligent, I soon grasped the situation. Science, see? Superscience of a great civilization of little green folk, conquering space. I catch on quick because I have always believed in science. I read about it sometimes. It's the nuts.

And believe it or not, all they needed was a little copper. I searched my small change and found two pennies. The green men gathered around, and promptly went wild with excitement. Thoughts of gratitude crowded my mind till I was dizzy.

THEN I remembered something. A few months back I'd had one of those penny boards to fill out with samples of Lincoln head cents, one of each year's mint. I hadn't been able to find all the required ones and had dropped the whole thing. But I had a lot of copper pennies left.

I ran in and collected about three dozen and offered them to the space travelers. They were overwhelmed, bowing and grinning and patting me on the leg affectionately. They lugged my pennies into the space ship, and then popped out again to form a solemn semi-circle around me. The leader raised his hand and began to spiel a lot of nice things. The main idea seemed to be that they were grateful no end, and wanted to do something for me. Just about anything within their power to bestow—and that took in plenty of territory.

I thought: it's just like the old fairy tale where the guy helps the little wood sprite and gets three wishes in return. Except that I only got one. So it had better be good.

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I pondered, and a lot of wild nonsense went through my head. Finally I realized that here was the chance of a lifetime to be a big shot, or pile up a quick fortune and live the life of Riley happily ever after. So I suggested:

"Could you give me the secret of how to make gold?"

No soap. They didn't know what gold was. So sorry.

"Well, then, how about some scientific jigger to make me invulnerable to all weapons?"

The leader of the little men looked me over and went into a huddle with his mob. The verdict again was no dice. They figured this was too great a power to hand out to any one person, especially to one whose character might not be the most noble. Nothing nasty about this remark, just a statement of fact.

The same remark was my answer to a delicate hint about a super weapon that might make me, quite by coincidence of course, all-powerful.

It began to look as though I wouldn't make any fortune after all. Then I thought of a slick one.

"Say, d'you happen to know how to make yourself invisible? That'd be an interesting power to have. For entertainment purposes, and stuff like that there." I looked innocent, so as not to let the little wise guy know what I was thinking.

He looked at me again as if he knew darn well what I had in mind, and then smiled a bit. One of the others went into the space ship and brought out a funny looking gadget. There was a circle of metal, just big enough to fit around the head of a green man. This was braced inside with a criss-cross of thin bars. And rising from this, on a short stem, was a squat cone.

"This," came the little man's thoughts, "is an apparatus to induce invisibility of its wearer. This ring is placed upon the head—normally it fits our heads but has been crudely adjusted to fit yours — and this tiny switch at the base of the cone is pressed." Fortunately, I am not very big—in fact, as James Littleman, I am well named—though somewhat on the stocky side. "A ray-screen is produced shooting down from the cone, completely enveloping the wearer, which bends light rays around him. For a period of four hours, no more and no less, he is invisible; then the power is exhausted."

The green man handed up a pair of small spectacles, the bows of which had been extended and bent so I could wear 'em. More thoughts came.

"These will permit the invisible one to see electronically, despite the fact that no true light rays penetrate the ray-screen. And mark well this warning, sir. The invisibility rays must never be allowed to touch the head, else the delicate neurons of the brain will be irremediably damaged, resulting in madness or death. Other parts of the body can withstand this force for very limited periods, but not the brain. This means that once this apparatus is adjusted and operating, it cannot be removed until the power has exhausted itself. Once invisible, the wearer must remain invisible for his allotted four hours."

I rubbed my hands in glee and told the little men I savvied everything. There were more demonstrations of affection and gratitude, worse than a reunion of tipsy fraternity brothers at homecoming day, and then they all piled into their space ship. I backed off. There was a terrific *swish,* a roaring, and there were my petunias, completely wrecked. But no space ship.

I grinned, hugging the invisibility device. For forty cents I had invested in something that would make me a fortune well inside of four hours. All over town there were places where money lies around loose, just waiting for me to come in and pick it up. They call 'em banks.

I always did say science is the nuts.

NEXT ayem I had my plans laid out. I drove downtown by ten o'clock, parked in a lot, and ducked into the rest room in the subway. There, where nobody could see, I fixed the invisibility unit on my dome, put on the goggles, and snapped the switch. Right away everything around me got dim and reddish.

I could see pretty well, though, ex-

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cept when I looked down and tried to see myself inside the cone of rays. That tilted the outfit on my head and made my feet and legs visible. Just for a second they felt cold and numb, as if ready to drop off from frostbite. So I didn't try that again.

Instead, I piled out of the subway building and headed for the Third National Bank. Once a woman shopper barged out of a store and ran into me before I could dodge. She went down in a spray of bundles, staring wildly around.

"Lady," I said with my customary patience, "whyn't you look where you're going?"

Courteously I picked up one of her fallen packages. She stared at the thing as if it would bite her, her eyes rolled up at sound of my disembodied voice, and pretty soon she passed out. I got away from there fast.

In the Third National the set-up was perfect. It was Monday, and lots of depositors were checking in their long green. I waited till one of the tellers left his cage. Then I just walked in and gathered up about six hundred bucks and stowed it away in my pocket. It was that easy. I shrank aside as the teller came hurrying back and carefully picked my way toward the front door.

Just then the teller let out a terrific squawk.

"Robbery!" he yelped. "Bank robbers!"

Alarm bells began to hammer; people ran about aimlessly. The big doors automatically slammed tight and locked. Police appeared magically waving their guns. And there I was, dodging and dancing about like a lightweight contender, trying to keep out of everybody's way, stuck with that six centuries and no way to get out.

At first it was a laugh. A sergeant began snapping questions at the scared teller.

"How long was you out of your cage?" he barked.

"Not more than thirty seconds."

"You sure the dough was there when you stepped out?"

"P-positive."

The officer barked at the bank guard, an old gink who hangs around the door doing nothing much in particular.

"D'you remember if anybody went out in the las' few minutes, before the teller yelled?"

The guard was positive. Four people had come in, but no one had left the bank for at least five minutes before the uproar.

"That means," thundered the sergeant, "the robber is still in this here bank!" Very portentous. Drawing his gun ominously. That kind of stuff. "Line up, everybody! Against the wall!"

I had to snicker. It sounded like a raspberry. The copper looked straight through me and growled, "Who said that?"

The search began, in spite of a lot of beefing from the customers. Naturally it was a flop. But what caught me with my—well, unawares—was that the people, after being searched, weren't allowed to go. Those bank doors stayed shut, and were going to stay shut, evidently, till the money turned up. Then it dawned on me that I was in trouble. If this business went on four hours, then I would be visible. Also sunk. I began to sweat. Besides, I had other plans of what to do with them four hours.

FINALLY I had to admit it. My first skirmish was a defeat. Or, rather, I would have to make a strategic withdrawal. In order to get away I had to give up the six hundred. Of course a man of my intelligence is never at a loss in an emergency. So I went over to the manager's desk—he was a sour-puss I had never liked, which was why I knocked off his bank in the first place—and tossed the sheaf of bills right into his lap.

"My Gawd!" he yammered, eyes popping and gazing around in all directions. "Here's the money!"

The sergeant strode over.

"Where'd you find it?"

Right there the manager made his mistake. He told the truth.

"It just dropped from nowhere into my lap. It materialized out of the air!"

The copper narrowed his eyes.

"Wise guy, huh? Now quit kid-

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din' an' let's have the facts."

"I'm telling you, Officer, it just appeared out of nothing. One minute I was sitting here worrying about it, and the next minute it flew into my lap."

"Well, I wouldn't quit worryin' if I was you. You're gonna have plenty to worry about if you stick to that story!"

The argument went on merrily, with the sweating manager getting in deeper and deeper every time he opened his mouth. I enjoyed it so much I forgot what I was doing, and it was after eleven when I realized that time was slipping by.

So I slipped in between two of the fidgeting customers and said, "Well, they've found the money. It's about time they let us out of here, don't you think?"

The two men turned to one another and said, "You're darn right!" simultaneously, and looked kind of foolishly at each other. But the idea stayed with 'em, and they began to put up a big fuss. Before very long the doors were opened, and I slipped outside.

My plans were all in a mess, of course; bank robbery, after my harrowing experince, was out, but definitely. From now on I was allergic to banks. I cudgeled my brains for a means of using my temporary invisibility to pile up some quick money. I had thought the bank idea so foolproof that I hadn't bothered to dope out any alternative plans.

The more I cudgeled, the less I could think of. Offhand I couldn't bring to mind a single place where there'd likely be any quantity of money on hand easily available. If you think it'd be so easy, try it yourself. Stores? Penny-ante stuff. Besides, it's quite a trick, even if a guy is invisible, to open a cash register and lift the money right under the vigilant nose of the clerk. Jewelry shop? No, again. Their displays are all paste gems; the real stuff is in a vault.

Besides, I'd still have the difficulty of finding a fence to market the stuff. This would be true of any business which has window displays; the best goods aren't stuck in the windows. Race-track? Yes, there's plenty of loose dough in the betting booths, but by the time the track opened, it would be too late in the afternoon. I would be visible again.

But the race-track idea brought me true inspiration. Bookies! They were illegal anyway. It would be a sort of public service to put one of 'em out of business, if you look at it the right way. And I knew one, "Odds-On" Ottomeyer, so called because he was the tightest odds chiseler in town. Many's the time he had wrecked a sure thing for me by offering odds that turned out even worse than track prices.

I FOUND Ottomeyer in the Elite Pool Hall, where he does his business in the back room with the connivance of the slightly enriched cop on the beat. Odds-On was all alone in the joint, practicing on a snooker table in the rear. I walked up to him and stopped. He turned at the sound of footsteps and goggled when he didn't see anybody.

He turned back to play the pink ball in the corner pocket. I leaned up close so, as the pink ball rolled straight for its target, the pocket suddenly vanished from Ottomeyer's view. The ball also disappeared, as I caught it with an invisible hand and took it off the table entirely. Ottomeyer staggered around the table making funny noises, desperately fumbled with the strangely behaving corner pocket. No pink ball.

"Strike me dead!" muttered the bookie hoarsely. "Strike me dead!"

That was my cue. In sepulchral tones I said:

"So happy to oblige. You see before you the hand of retribution."

I stuck one hand out into the air before his nose, just for a second before it got too numbed.

That was plenty. Ottomeyer passed out in a dead faint without me laying a finger on him. Nobody was around to see how the middle of Ottomeyer's body became invisible as I straddled him. Inside the ray screen I couldn't see what I was doing, of course, but in his wallet I found two packages of crisp paper bound round once with another thin strip, the way all currency

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comes direct from the bank. They rustled comfortingly.

I judged there must be at least two or three grand. Leaving the 6-ball in Ottomeyer's coat pocket to give him something else to think about, I beat it back to the parking lot and climbed in my car. Science, I always say, is the nuts.

It was twelve-thirty by then. I had an hour and a half of invisibility left but, think as I might, I couldn't figure out anywhere I could pick up any more heavy sugar without risk. Especially as I was still allergic to banks after my experience at the Third National.

So I decided to call it a day and go on home. After all, I was sure I had a pretty fair return on my investment, and in spite of me being a pretty smart guy, there was no use pushing my luck. So I tooled my jalopy, sitting with my head tilted back a bit so as not to allow the ray screen to affect my feet or legs, toward the street.

Right there I ran into some unexpected trouble. The parking lot attendant happened to be standing near the driveway, talking to a woman, when I wheeled by. The two of 'em stared like hydrophobiacs at the apparently driverless car. The boy thought at first the car was just coasting down the gentle incline, having slipped a faulty brake.

He jumped on the running-board and opened the door to slide in. I gave him a shove. He sat down hard in the dirt. I tossed the parking ticket stub at him, accelerated sharply, and turned into Hill Street. A quick gander back showed me the dame had collapsed in a gibbering heap, while the attendant was gnawing one thumb and having a tough time keeping his eyeballs from dropping out.

I never saw traffic so crazy as it was that day. Horns blasted at me all through the business district, and cars swerved like jitterbugs getting out of my way. Dozens of near accidents littered the trail of my passing. It was when I was well into the residential section that the inevitable happened. There was a wail of a siren, and a radio patrol car pulled alongside.

"Pull over, you!" came the familiar yell, bull-headed and arrogant.

Then I saw a policeman's face lean out the window, and the official jaw dropped six inches.

"My Gawd!" he croaked. "They ain't nobody in it!"

OBEDIENTLY, I drew up to the curb with the engine idling, cussing silently. Fate was sure making it tough for me to be a super-criminal. I couldn't outrun a radio car, and a sensation was the last thing I wanted to create at the moment. Instead, I decided to outwit the law with my superior intelligence. The two wondering officers stalked up to my car and flung open the door with a dramatic gesture. Two silly grins wavered uncertainly.

"It just ain't possible," one cop said. "Or maybe it's a ghost."

"I can see the captain's face when he reads our report on this," the second one said. "D'ya think maybe we oughta ignore the whole thing?"

"We can't. We got the call over the radio to investigate. I better drive it in to the station, I guess."

He started to climb in. The situation was desperate, when I got an inspiration. Making my voice metallic as possible, I chanted:

"Please do not touch anything in this automobile. It is an experimental machine, operated by remote radio control. Please do not touch anything in this automobile. It is an experimental machine, operated by remote radio control."

The two cops nodded together as though they were tied to the same string.

"Aah-h, so that's it," one said with relief.

They looked around comically to see where the remote control apparatus could be broadcasting from, and decided it must be one of the few parked cars visible. They never thought it odd that there was no radio nor aerial in my heap. They were dopes, sure enough. While they stood there debating the situation, I shifted quietly and drove away. Once again science was my ally. I figured it was a good omen.

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Finally I got home safe a little after one o'clock and carried the Ottomeyer loot into the house. Careful not to expose my hands to the screen of rays, I tossed the two bundles onto the table to examine my haul.

The first was a sheaf of canceled checks. The other was a stack of betting markers. Can you beat it?

I couldn't tear my hair or even bury my head in my hands; that would have wrecked my fingers in the rays. All I could do was sit there like a dummy and groan and swear.

THEN the telephone rang. I bellied up to it till it was invisible and unracked the receiver.

"Is this University 2841?" a voice sounding kind of Oriental asked. "Mr. James Littleman?"

"It is. But Mr. Littleman can't be seen right now." Pretty good, huh?

"Our information," come back the other guy very bland, "is that Mr. Littleman is possessor of Chinese lottery ticket number 3X4049. Is this true?"

"Sure. So what? Y' mean to say I'm a winner?"

"Precisely. 3X4049 pays to its holder one thousand dollars. To collect, you must appear in person before two o'clock this afternoon, at the lottery headquarters. The address on Main Street is printed on your ticket. Congratulations, Mr. Littleman."

My jubilance was short-lived. "Two p.m.!" I yelled. "That's impossible! You gotta give me more time!"

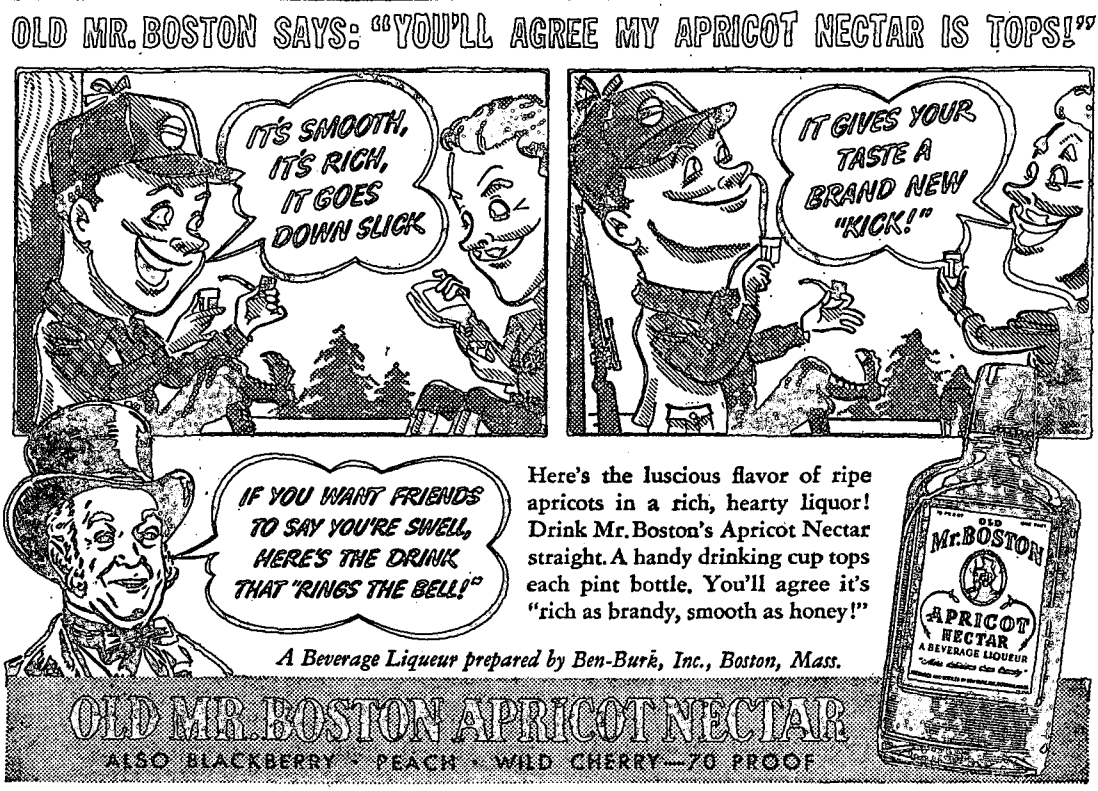
"So sorry," came the imperturbable voice. "It is the rule. So printed upon the back of your ticket. We have been trying to get you by telephone all morning."

"But I can't appear personally till after two. I'm invisible till then!"

There was a shocked silence at the other end of the wire, then the connection was quietly broken. I think my reason tottered. I would have committed suicide right then, only I couldn't see where to shoot myself.

What was it I always said about science? Aw, nuts!

Next Month: EARTH FOR INSPIRATION, by CLIFFORD D. SIMAK


OLD MR. BOSTON SAYS: "YOU'LL AGREE MY APRICOT NECTAR IS TOPS!"
IT'S SMOOTH, IT'S RICH, IT GOES DOWN SLICK
IT GIVES YOUR TASTE A BRAND NEW "KICK!"
IF YOU WANT FRIENDS TO SAY YOU'RE SWELL, HERE'S THE DRINK THAT 'RINGS THE BELL!"
Here's the luscious flavor of ripe apricots in a rich, hearty liquor! Drink Mr. Boston's Apricot Nectar straight. A handy drinking cup tops each pint bottle. You'll agree it's "rich as brandy, smooth as honey!"
OLD Mr. BOSTON
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A Beverage Liqueur prepared by Ben-Burk, Inc., Boston, Mass.
OLD MR. BOSTON APRICOT NECTAR
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STRANGER FROM ☆ THE STARS ☆

By

FREDERICK ARNOLD KUMMER, Jr.

Author of "The Exterminators," "The Tyrant of Mars," etc.

Wrecked on an Ancient World, Spaceman Ylyga Jactor Works Future Magic to Escape to His Home Planet!

CHAPTER I

Space Wrecked

"CALLING Space Station One! Space Ship *Pioneer* calling Space Station One! Have penetrated upper strata of planet's atmosphere and now approaching destination. Through breaks in cloud formations, land and sea areas are visible. Forward landing rockets are still operating, though their beat sounds slightly irregular. Within a few minutes our long trip will be over. Interplanetary communication, man's fondest dream, will be a reality! To the scientists and engineers whose efforts created the *Pioneer*, we— The irregularity of the rockets has increased! Captain Hathor is working desperately at the controls. One of the main tubes has cut out. The remainder, even open full, will not be enough! Falling! Passed through last cloud banks! No time for repairs! Above sea—waves rushing up— Only seconds left! To all at home, good-by! Firse Interplanetary Expedition is doomed!"

Ylyga Jactor

* * *

That I, Ylyga Jactor, radio operator of the *Pioneer*, should be writing these words still seems unbelievable. The great Life Force, the Ultimate Wisdom, must have watched over me. Who will ever read these words? It is doubtful if anyone will. My only hope is that the unlucky *Pioneer's* sister-ship, the *Silver Star*, now nearing completion at the Space Station, may find this document. If I should die on this queer, savage world, these notes may reveal to any subsequent rescue expedition the fate of the last survivor of the *Pioneer*.

I cannot, even now, shake off the sensation of unreality. This odd dwelling, the rude reed pen and parchment with which I write, the stolid, uncomprehending gaze of the primitives—

But I am ahead of my story.

You, back on the home planet, know through our radio messages the story of our flight up to the time of the crash. You will recall that my last message stated that one of the forward tubes had cut out and we were streak-

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A dazzling bolt of lightning leaped down to the copper rod!

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ing down toward the sea. I can't remember clearly what happened after that. I can remember Captain Hathor working desperately at the controls, the others racing forward to try to start the damaged tube. Through the view-plate I could see the gray, foaming waves rushing up to meet us. Then we struck!

The crash was deafening. I had one fleeting glimpse of the ship's nose explosively bursting inward toward me, a solid and murderous wall of spray and splintering metal. Then a torrent of water engulfed us, tossed me about like a chip in a storm. I remember struggling against the maelstorm, blinded, my lungs filled with salt water. I had a terrifying sensation of being dragged down, and everything went black.

TO have recovered consciousness at all was a shock to me. It had seemed inevitable that I must be dragged under by the diving space ship. But to recover consciousness on a warm, sunny beach seemed little short of a miracle. Some freak current must have dragged me from the wrecked cabin and thrown me up on this shore.

The first thought that crossed my mind was of the others—Hathor, Jarnegan, Callis, and the rest of the crew. A group of men cannot work together for months, deliberately welding themselves into an efficient unit, without becoming linked by strong, intangible bonds. As I stared out over the gray, restless waves, I thought of Hathor's quietly firm voice, Callis' jokes and nonsense, Dorban's dry, drawling speculations upon the flora and fauna we might expect to find here. And now they were gone, leaving not a trace on the surface of the sea, nor on the beach.

I was marooned, alone on a strange planet! I had on my tunic, my heavy fiberoid cloak, the loose sandals we wore aboard the ship. At my belt were my energy gun and a small emergency case containing mostly medical supplies. And with those I must face a new, utterly strange world!

From the past, my thoughts turned to the future, to this planet which must be my home until such time as a rescue expedition arrives, if one ever does. The shore was sandy, rocky, barren. The air was thin but breathable. I found myself panting, yet the light gravity of the planet made movement so easy that the thinness of the atmosphere was not too much of a strain.

Inland from the sea were mountains, wild and arid plateaus rising sharply from the beach. Accustomed to our lush green vegetation, the reddish, dusty, semi-desert seemed unspeakably desolate. In addition to its natural dryness, there were evidences of drought. The scrawny scrub trees were drooping. Most of the queer alien vegetation was burnt brown by a pitiless Sun. The fact that there were trees and shrubs, although different from our own, was somehow reassuring. Given edible plants and some animal life, I might survive.

I stood up, wondering whether to try for food from the sea, or push inland in search of the higher life our scientists believe exist on this planet. Suddenly I heard a voice!

I whirled instinctively at sound of it, groping for my gun, wondering what monstrous form of life awaited me. I gave a gasp of amazement.

The figure emerging from the thicket of warped, dusty saplings was that of a human being!

A woman, old and bent, she might, except for a certain primitive quality of features, have gone unnoticed on the streets of Kylis. True, this woman lacked the fine lineaments, the nobility of countenance, the high forehead of our race. Beyond that she was basically the same. After all the efforts our scientists have wasted in trying to visualize the sort of queer entities which must inhabit this world, they proved to be of our own species!

This particular being wore a single coarse garment of some woven material. She seemed feeble, half-starved, and carried a bundle of what looked like twigs from trees. She stared at me curiously, apparently quite friendly, then spoke again. Naturally the harsh words meant nothing to me, but to my surprise her thoughts could be picked up quite clearly.

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As the *Pioneer's* communications expert, I had a thorough knowledge of telepathy. Yet who could have foreseen a race whose brain waves were sufficiently similar to ours to enable us to understand them? The withered old being of this planet had asked who I was!

"Ylyga," I replied. "Ylyga Jactor. I come from"—it was obvious she wouldn't know anything about planets or interplanetary life—"the stars."

CURIOUSLY enough, while it was impossible that she could have understood my actual words, she seemed to receive my strong mental impulses. She seemed, indeed, to be unaware that I'd spoken in a foreign tongue. My thought waves, reaching her brain, superseded the mental reception of the sound waves coming via her ears. I thought of all the elaborate apparatus we had carried aboard the *Pioneer* for communication with an intelligent race, should we encounter one. Involuntarily I smiled.

At my words the primitive being shook her head sadly. Her flow of thoughts puzzled me. She seemed to feel pity that one who was, by her standards, so fine in appearance, should be so unfortunate. Then realization struck me. She believed me to be one of her own people who had lost his wits!

After all, my more powerful muscles and finer features did not necessarily mean another race. My long cloak and plain tunic certainly were no cause to marvel. Even my energy gun and small emergency kit, both leather-bound, were nothing to attract attention. A being from the stars was beyond her comprehension, and she had rationalized as best she could. It was hardly a complimentary role, but I decided to play it out.

At a gesture from her I followed along the rocky path. The path led upward among huge crags, sun-scorched trees, barren reddish plateaus. The very wildness of the terrain awed me, after our own intensely cultivated green fields, our great cities with their towering skyscrapers. At length we reached a small hovel roofed with dry grass.

"Enter." The old primitive—her name was Zara, I learned—pushed open the rude door. "Food and rest may cure your delusions of being star-born."

The interior of the hut was wretched, with mud floor and open hearth. It made me feel like a time traveler, taken back to the dawn of our own people. She belonged to the same race as ours, I decided, only in a less advanced state of evolution. I formed a dozen fine theories. At that time I had not yet begun to suspect the basic difference between these people and our own.

The meal the old woman placed before me was frugal, because of the drought, she explained. The fruits and grains were coarse, compared with our chemically prepared foods, but not unpalatable. We had nearly finished when I heard voices outside.

The door swung open. Four of the primitives entered. Hairy, rudely clad males, they bore the limp, wet form of a young lad with keen and intelligent features. Zara stared, her face suddenly white.

"My son!" she choked. "My boy!"

She threw herself upon the cold, inert form in a wild storm of emotion.

"We did what we could," one of the bronzed men muttered. "We were fishing close inshore when a—a monster plunged from out of the sky. A gleaming monster breathing flame."

He appealed to his companions with a glance and they nodded, shuddering.

"No man has ever seen the like of this vast beast! It struck the water and there were mighty waves, clouds of vapor! We could only cling to the boat and pray for deliverance. When the sea became quiet and the steam clouds arose, we saw that Tamar had been hurled into the sea. We fished his body out but it was too late." The male shook his head. "Strange and fearful things are happening in our land. I am afraid!"

ZARA, kneeling beside the drowned boy, seemed scarcely to have heard. But I realized that the *Pioneer's* crash had caused her son's

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death, and I resolved to try to make amends. I stepped from the shadows, drawing queer, half-frightened glances from the group of primitive men.

"How long has the boy been dead?" I asked.

"Since noon," one of the men muttered. "But who—"

I cut his question short. The period of time had been long and there was not a moment to lose. I opened my emergency kit, drew out my vial of *alnor*. You will remember that we each carried a flask of the drug, with a needle in its cap, to be used only as a last resort. Whether it would work on a being of another world, I couldn't tell, but it was worth a chance.

Swiftly I bared the boy's chest, plunged the needle into his heart.

"Madman!" Zara cried. "Mutilating my Tamar's body! Stop him—"

She broke off abruptly. The stimulant, entering the boy's heart, had taken effect. Faintly the veins in his damp forehead had begun to throb. When the chest lifted convulsively the group of primitives fell to their knees.

"A miracle!" they cried. "Tamar has been called back from the dead!"

Old Zara crouched before me.

"Stranger from the stars," she whispered, "forgive me. Forgive me for doubting you."

Three hours upon this hot barren world and I was almost a god! That was the last thing I wanted to be. I tried to explain that it was only science, that if they kept their faith in the Eternal Wisdom, their own descendants might some day know as much.

But in spite of all my protests I was made an object of veneration. As the news spread to the nearby village, crowds came to see me and the restored boy.

CHAPTER II

The Sorcerer

SINCE then, two days have passed. I remain in this vicinity because my last radio message gave this position and any rescue ship should land close by. Of course months must pass before I can hope for that, if indeed my last message got through at all. Meanwhile I have obtained dried skins, a sort of ink, and am writing these notes.

There is so much I might write about the peculiar flora and fauna of this planet that I scarcely know where to begin. Perhaps the most interesting fact, and at the same time the most disturbing, concerns these people. Physically they resemble us. Mentally, one would say that they were in the evolutionary period. Allowing for physical differences in the two planets, they are similar to our own race some ten to fifteen millenia ago. There is, however, one distinct and ominous difference. These primitives are driven by—

Will finish later.

* * *

My interruption in the first part of this record was caused by the boy Tamar. Now completely recovered, he came running to tell me that an important visitor wished to see me. I found an old man with a gray beard and wearing a long white robe. He stared at me rather pompously.

"I am Izak, the king's scribe," he announced. "Tales have reached great Hahab, ruler of all Yudia, reporting of your powers. He has ordered you to appear before him."

Scribe, I might explain, is used in the archaic sense of the word—someone who writes for those who are not sufficiently educated to do so. This, and the fact that they have a heredity, one-man government, will give an idea of how primitive they are. With some misgivings, I decided that it would be wise to make friends with this ruler. I agreed to go. Tamar, who always followed me like some faithful animal, joined us.

With the scribe, Izak, we made our way down the hillside, across the parched, sandy, red-hued wasteland. At length, on a cliff overlooking the sea, a white, low building of curiously ornate design was visible.

"This," Izak explained, "is the summer palace of the rulers."

Guards in a sort of metallic body-

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armor admitted us. We followed the scribe through broad corridors to the large central room.

Whatever else we may say about these people, they have a barbaric sense of beauty. Warriors, tall, solemn dignitaries, lightly clad dancers, slaves and priests, made a swirl of color about the curiously carved black wood dais. A bearded, hawk-nosed man, apparently the leader of these Yudians, sat upon the throne. He seemed savagely arrogant as he leaned forward to address me.

"Tales have reached us of your powers," he announced harshly. "It is said you brought a lad back from the grave. Our followers of Marduk"—he glanced sullenly at a group of queerly garbed individuals nearby—"give us only empty words. Break this drought, sorcerer, and your reward will be great."

I thought a moment before I answered him. You know that for centuries our Rain Stations have controlled the weather. But how could I attempt to set up a Station on another planet?

"I'm no miracle-worker," I said. "I come from another world. A world in the sky. I ask only to live here in peace until I'm able to return home. As for bringing this boy back from the dead, that involved nothing but drugs and a certain amount of luck."

THE ruler didn't seem convinced. The females of this race, I noticed, look less primitive than the males, but act more so. For the woman beside him moved lazily, laughed.

"Here is a new sort of sorcerer," she said. "Most of them cannot be stopped from casting spells." She studied me closely with tawny, catlike eyes. "Yet he looks different from our people somehow."

"What proof have we of his powers?" One of the followers of Marduk strode forward with a slither of sable robes. "Let him test the power of our adepts. If he overcomes them, I will believe his tales."

A roar of approval swept the throne room. Tamar touched my arm.

"Do not refuse, master," he whispered. "If you do, you will be slain!"

Of that I had no great fear. One blast of the ray gun would clear the hall. But such slaughter seemed useless, so I nodded acceptance.

The high priest grinned, led the way through the arched doorway and into a garden beyond. Here the strange and brilliant vegetation of this world was kept fresh by marble fountains, despite the drought. Standing with my hand on Tamar's shoulder, I watched the king and his attendants stride into the garden.

Suddenly the group of adepts broke into a chant, a weirdly inhuman melody. Even I, who had believed myself above such atavistic emotional appeal, felt the force of it. From beneath his robes, the high priest drew an object. The sight of it brought a mutter of horror from his watchers. In his hand he held a mummified head of a child.

"Mighty Marduk!" he moaned. "With these dead lips, speak!"

In answer the withered lips moved and a queer, faint voice sighed across the courtyard.

"Marduk speaks."

Terror lay sharp upon the faces of the assemblage. Only the dark queen seemed unafraid. She leaned forward, eyes intent.

"Who is this stranger," the priest went on, "who claims to come from the stars?"

"He brings doom and ruin!" the teraph replied. "Slay—"

It was then that I leaped. My powerful leap carried me across the garden in one bound. My hand clamped over the man's mouth.

"Cleverly done, throwing your voice so that it seemed to come from the teraph," I said. "And working its jaws by means of fine threads is a shrewd trick. Can Marduk speak, now that I cover *your* mouth?"

Face contorted with fury, he twisted free of my grip.

"You shall feel our power!" he snarled. "My eyes shall steal your soul." He bent forward, savagely twisting the glittering gem that hung about his neck. "Look at me. Your soul is mine—mine!"

For a moment I stared at him, puzzled. Then I understood. This barbarian was attempting to exert mental

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control-over me. I, who had made a study of telepathy! It would have been funny, if it hadn't been so pathetic. I frowned in concentration, and for a moment our wills clashed. Then his hands fell to his sides and his face became a blank mask.

"Speak only the truth," I commanded. "What is Marduk and why do you serve him?"

"Marduk is a statue of stone," the man said thickly. "I serve him because of the gifts the worshipers bring."

WHEN he said that, I relaxed my will and turned to the king.

"You heard?" I said. "Tricks, lies! There is no magic in human life. Only work, wisdom, progress and the great Life Force that every people in the Solar System must acknowledge."

"Words!" the dark, angry-eyed queen cried. "Wizards and priests are prodigal with words. You say the followers of Marduk deceive us with tricks and lies. Let us see your powers, man of the stars!"

I acted swiftly. If these people wanted to be impressed, I'd impress them in a way they would never forget. With a quick movement I drew my energy gun, leveled it at one of the marble fountains, fired. Under the dazzling blue beam, the water disappeared in a haze of steam. The stone was pulverized, began to run like molten lava. The strange, brutish Yudians backed away in terror.

"Peace!" The black-browed king clawed at his beard. "We—we believe! Yet if you have the power to call down fire from heaven, why do you refuse to raise the drought that brings famine and misery to my people? Surely this would be a small task for a man from the stars."

The rest of the gathering took up the cry.

"End the drought, man from the stars! Bring water to our parched fields!"

I didn't know just how to answer them. To their simple minds, anyone who controlled "lightning" must control rain. My inability to produce rain must have seemed a deliberate refusal. Already several of the followers of Marduk were whispering with the queen and I didn't like their manner.

To conjure up rain would make me a public hero. To refuse when it seemed to them I could do so easily, would make me hated. Already the priests were enemies. If they decided to kill me, even my energy gun wouldn't help. Poison in my food, a spear thrown from ambush, a knife-thrust while I slept—Clearly it was either rain or my life.

But their belief that the ray gun was lightning had given me an idea. Mad as it seemed, it might work. With a confidence I did not feel, I faced the assemblage.

"Give me as much copper as twenty men can carry," I declared. "Also lodestone, iron, metal-workers, smiths. Within a day you shall have rain!"

With as grand a manner as I could put on, I beckoned to Tamar and strode from the garden. It was all quite dramatic. But by the time I reached the hilltop upon which I had decided to conduct my experiment, I was beginning to wonder whether or not I was the biggest fool in the Solar System. To build a Rain Station in one day, and no power to run it! Unless my wild scheme succeeded. . . .

There wasn't much time for speculation, however. Quickly I selected my site on the rocky, barren hilltop. Old Izak, the scribe, appeared with a score of slaves bearing copper bars, half a dozen metal-workers with their rude tools, and a company of archers. The presence of the bowmen made me realize more than ever that it was either rain or my life.

With the young primitive Tamar as my assistant, I started to work.

Looking back, I remember little of those twenty-four hours. I can recall giving endless orders, listening to the incessant ring of hammers and the everlasting red glow of charcoal fires. I can recall hurriedly sending for lapidaries and goldsmiths to do such delicate jobs as making wire and fashioning intricate terminals.

SO frantically did we work that it seemed as if only an hour or so had passed before I saw the king and his barbaric retinue advancing up the

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hillside. It all struck me as utterly insane. Seventy-two hours before, I had been safe aboard the *Pioneer*. Now the wild, barren, utterly bizarre scenery of a strange planet lay before me. I was trying to perform as difficult a scientific feat as was ever attempted in order to avoid being killed by a primitive race.

No doubt you'll wonder what I was hoping to do. Well, first of all, I had to produce molecular drag rays, such as are used in our Rain Stations. Obviously normal air, even on this planet, is full of water vapor. It requires only the bringing together of the molecules of water, forming clouds, to create rain.

Molecules, of course, repel when their natural distance apart. But when they are close, they attract. The m.d. rays merely slow down the molecules until, losing their high velocity, they attract one another and come together to form water particles or clouds.

While the apparatus for creating the rays is fairly simple, the Stations require large amounts of electrical power to cover any considerable area. That was my problem. And all I had was a crude m.d. ray projector, a simple electric motor and a copper rod about fifteen feet high.

The crowd of brightly clad primitives halted some distance away, their coarse features expectant. Then the black-browed ruler spoke.

"You have promised rain," he said menacingly. "Let it fall!"

CHAPTER III

The Price of Success

WITHOUT a word I turned to my machine, fitted the energy pack from my ray gun into the power slot. This, I hoped, would act as a starter. After that, if all went well, the machine would function automatically.

Minutes passed as the invisible m.d. rays swept the sky—the most tense minutes I have ever spent. With the power pack of the energy gun in the machine, I was helpless. The dark-eyed queen was whispering once more with the saturnine disciples of Marduk. I had just bent over the projector to see if it was working correctly when I heard a cry from Tamar. But it was a cry of joy and wonder.

"I see a cloud, no bigger than a man's hand! Look!"

I straightened up. A small dark cloud actually was forming. Then another period of anxiety set in. Would the little power pack keep the m.d. rays in operation until the energy source I hoped for began to function? The cloud seemed to form with exasperating slowness. The throng of primitives was as silent as death, waiting.

Abruptly there was an Earth-shaking roar. A dazzling bolt of lightning leaped down to the copper rod. Success!

The day before, when the ruler had said I possessed the power to bring down fire from heaven, he had given me the idea. Each minute particle of moisture holds a surface charge of electricity. But if they are brought together, the surface of a larger drop is less in area than several smaller drops of equal volume. That gives an excess surface charge of electricity which, when released, produces the well known phenomenon of lightning.

Quickly I took the failing power-pack from the machine, replaced it in the gun. I knew that from then on, lightning would operate the m.d. projector. It did. The lightning lashed down in blue streaks that struck the copper rod sending the m.d. rays in a burst into the sky. The bank of clouds grew thicker and blacker with each instant. And then the rain, with startling suddenness, began to pour down.

Had I been some fakir, intent on impressing the primitive Yudians, I could not have arranged a more awe-inspiring spectacle. The crash of thunder was incessant. The jagged flashes of lightning leaped continuously Earthward to the copper rod, their eerie blue luminescence lighting up the dark, stormy scene. The rain seethed down in tropical fury. Above the shattering crash of thunder, I

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could hear a tumultuous cry from the crowd.

"Rain! The stranger from the stars has brought us rain!"

This was my hour of triumph, and it promised to relieve me of all further conflict with these queer superstitious beings. Only the queen and the followers of Marduk seemed unmoved. They, I felt, would not dare show open antagonism to a benefactor of the people. Thus I thought I had hurdled the greatest barrier, the establishment of friendly relations with the natives of this world.

* * *

IT has been months—the difference in the length of day on this planet throws me off somehow—since I wrote in this log. I have been too busy to do more than make notes of the specimens of flora and fauna found here. You will remember I prophesied peace with the Yudians after my "miracle." For a time this was so. But today, as I write these words, I am far from sure. Indeed, it is one of the reasons why I am hastening to bring this record up to date. At any moment I expect to hear—

But let me arrange the facts in order.

After the rain-making episode, I was revered as a god, though I have always insisted to these primitives that I was a man and that only the Eternal Wisdom is supreme. In spite of this, my little hut on this mountain has been besieged with the sick, crippled and blind, all hoping to be healed. I do what I can for them, though in most cases it is nothing.

I changed my residence from old Zara's dwelling to my own hut here, for this spot on the hilltop gives me a fine lookout for any possible rescue ship. Moreover, at its summit, seen easily from above, I have laid out great slabs of white stone in a symbol of distress that any of your space ships will recognize. This was done with the aid of Tamar and half a dozen of his friends, who have attached themselves to me as followers of the "miracle-worker."

Old Izak, the court scribe, spends much time here, too. When I tell of the scientific wonders on our planet, he calls it a description of heaven and solemnly writes it down on his tablets. Then I try to explain that it's only mental and moral progress, that his own planet will some day achieve as much. He insists that I'm prophesying!

As for Tamar and his friends, I have attempted to instill some logic into them, show them a few simple scientific feats. But no matter how much I try to explain evolution, progress and learning, they still regard me as something supernatural.

This planet will prove a real biological laboratory for our scientists. Some of its vegetation and animal life are quite similar to types on our own world. Most are entirely alien, but a few are species that have long since been extinct at home. I could write pages about the extremes of heat and cold, the abundance of raw materials, the utterly bizarre scenery, so different from our green cultivated areas.

But perhaps the most fascinating and most ominous note is struck by the people. I once started to explain why, despite the similarity in appearance, they are so different from us. That difference is psychological.

We were also emotional once, if the histories are correct. Hating and fearing, we tore each other to bits with metal monsters, chemicals, flying death-machines. But in the past millenium we have subordinated the bulk of our emotions to clear, sensible logic.

These Yudians are slaves of emotion. Greed, ambition, nationalism, fear, and a thousand lesser passions sway their every action. If there is a difference of opinion, they do not argue it out logically. They let their emotions drive them into physical combat.

Among such people one must be wary of every word, every gesture, for fear of arousing an illogical reaction. They are like children, yet children strong and fierce enough to be dangerous. It is impossible to teach Tamar and the others pure logic. Therefore I stress the emotions of kindness, love, pity, for these are rarely dangerous.

Between studying the natives and collecting specimens of plants and

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minerals, I have been kept quite busy. This morning I was making notes on a form of crystal highly prized by these people. I heard a tramp of feet outside, and a company of their fierce warriors strode up the rocky path. Old Izak tugged at his beard as he pointed.

"Palace guards," he muttered. "Be wary. The queen and her priests of Marduk have never forgiven you."

"Hail, stranger from the stars!" the leader of the warriors announced, grounding his spear. "This message comes from our queen. Come to her aid with all speed. Her son, our prince, is dying. She needs your wisdom to save him."

"Don't go, master!" Tamar caught at my arm. "It's some trap!"

I THOUGHT for a moment. It might indeed be a trap. But the guards' thoughts revealed that the boy was really ill. If I refused to help, the woman would hate me even more. Besides, my energy gun still contained enough power to do considerable damage if the worst came to the worst. I patted Tamar's shoulder reassuringly and nodded to the guards.

An hour later we reached the big marble dwelling, where I was led to a room overlooking the sea. The queen stood by the window, red-lipped and enigmatic in spite of her evident sorrow. On a silk-draped couch lay a dark youth, so still that at first I thought him dead.

"My son." She motioned toward the boy. "He fell, injuring his back. For three days he has not stirred. Save him, man of the stars!"

I examined the young primitive carefully. His spine was broken, and I am no doctor. I shook my head hopelessly.

"No!" The queen drew a sharp breath. "You—you must save him! Surely this is a small thing to one of your powers. You brought the other boy back from death. Why can you not restore one not yet dead?"

She drew near me, imploring.

"He is my son, my first-born. Have pity! Riches beyond all reckoning will be yours." Her hand rested on my arm. "Aye, and more! One with your power might well be ruler of Yudia. Save the boy and I—"

"No use," I said, though I felt sorry for this strange, ruthless creature. "At Kylis our doctors might heal him, but I haven't the knowledge. I'm afraid the boy must die."

As I spoke, a change came over the woman. Fierce anger drove away the sorrow in her dark eyes. Her lips twisted into a bitter snarl.

"Spite! You are taking revenge against me because I sided with the priests of Marduk. You refuse to help my son because you hate me. You and your talk of justice, kindliness. You'll be made to heal him!"

She whirled about, tugged savagely at a tasseled cord. Almost before I realized what was happening, a score of burly guards burst into the room, spears raised.

"Take him!" the queen cried. "I want him alive. He must be forced to cure your prince!"

There was no time to unfasten the holster of my energy gun. But I knew that, since my muscles had been scientifically conditioned, I was far stronger than these barbarous Yudians.

In one leap I plunged toward the guards.

Taken aback by the suddenness of the maneuver, they were barely able to raise their weapons. I tore the spear from the hand of the foremost warrior, lifted the man like a sack of meal and hurled him into the group at the door. In a confused tangle of arms and legs they went down, cursing and shouting.

Vaulting the bewildered mass of men, I raced along the dim corridor toward the entrance of the palace. Here again warriors tried to halt me, but I had drawn my energy gun by now. A blast, aimed at the wall above their heads, sent them cowering back in terror.

Hardly had I escaped from the marble building when I heard shouts behind me, a thudding of hoofs. War-chariots! I could have cut them down with my gun. But such slaughter, for a civilized being, was repulsive, especially when there was another way out. Drawing a quick, deep breath, I began to run.

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WITH my conditioned muscles, I fairly flew. The war-chariots could not gain and I could hear the warriors, lashing their steeds, give cries of wonder. All at once I saw a small river blocking my path. In my haste I had taken the wrong branch of the trail. Instead of reaching the ford by which I had crossed earlier, I was faced by a deep, racing current. My pursuers, believing me trapped, shouted in triumph.

Without slackening my pace, I drew the energy gun, focused its beam upstream. Water sweeping down from the hills struck the ray and vanished into mist. Below the point of vaporization, only damp, muddy rocks were visible. Across these I raced.

As soon as I gained the opposite bank, I snapped off the ray and the water flooded the channel again in a raging torrent. Amazed, the charioteers reined in their sweating steeds. Then at a furious command from their leader, they wheeled about and headed downstream in search of a shallow crossing.

I was able to reach my hilltop shack unmolested. At any minute now the army of Yudians may be upon me. I am writing these words with all haste so that some sort of record will remain. Tamar, old Izak and several others refuse to leave, but the case looks hopeless.

My energy gun's power is now almost exhausted. I can scarcely hope to escape, since my face and form are easily recognizable among these primitives. I am sick of this mad, emotion-ridden world.

Tamar has just entered to tell me that the army of the Yudians is pouring on to the plain about the base of the hill. I may never write in this journal again. If not, good-by!

CHAPTER IV

Battle on an Alien World

I HARDLY know what to write, nor how to write it. Everything seemed like some disordered dream.

You will remember that my last entry told of the vast armies of primitives sweeping toward us. They made a strange and menacing sight in the blood-red sunset, brass armor and keen weapons glittering, brilliant robes fluttering in the hot, thin air. The furious followers of Marduk were urging them on with shrill cries.

There is a madness in the blood of these beings, a madness that drives them to senseless slaughter and destruction. I sometimes wonder, should they attain a civilization comparable to that of our people, whether the madness will die out.

The warriors did not charge in a body, as I had expected. Instead they sent out small groups to draw the fire of my gun.

Somehow they had sensed that its unusual power was failing. A dozen at a time they darted forward, forcing me to discharge my weapon. Leaving several of their men lying dead upon the rocky slopes, they would retreat, reform and dash forward again.

The hillside was strewn with charred blackened corpses, and birds that feasted on carrion circled evilly against the red sky. The ray was only a feeble glow.

At best it would last only a few more minutes.

I turned to Tamar, old Izak and the others, spoke hurriedly.

"The light that kills grows dim, but soon it will be night. You are of this race and can pass unnoticed, but my face and form are sufficiently alien to mark me. There's time for you to escape. Hurry!"

"No." Tamar shook his head. "We stay with you."

In spite of the howling throng below, I felt a strange sense of confidence in this primitive race. Though most of them gloried in destruction and war, there would always be a few with deeper reason. It would be a hard battle for the few, throughout the centuries to come, but I felt that in the end they would win. What happened to me, a mere castaway spaceman, didn't matter so much now.

With fierce shouts, the masses of savage warriors began to storm the slopes, brandishing gleaming spears

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and swords. I raised the gun and fired. A wan blue bolt of energy struck the ranks of attackers and half a dozen of them fell. But the remainder, urged on by frenzied priests, swept forward. Again and again I fired, until the ray was but a pallid luminescence. The men it struck were only stunned and the rest poured on unchecked. The wave of warriors was a couple of hundred yards away when the beam winked out.

Tamar and the others had gathered behind me with spears, swords and clubs, hopeless weapons against the onrushing hordes of warriors. There was no chance for any of us to survive. . . .

"Master!" Old Izak cried. "Look —an omen—a new star!"

I followed his gaze. In the dark sky flared a red point of light, far brighter than any known star. For a long moment I puzzled over it. Then realization struck me. That red, flickering light was the exhaust of rockets.

A rescue ship!

But my exultation lasted only an instant. In the darkness a ship, especially one so high, could never spot me. The pile of wood I had prepared for this emergency was soaked by recent rains. I was unarmed, the howling hordes of Yudians was swarming up the steep slope, and there was no way to signal the rescue ship. This was the crowning irony. The vessel would continue circling lazily high overhead, unable to penetrate the darkness, while the last survivor of those they sought was slaughtered below! Unless I could signal them somehow—

THE foremost warrior was less than fifty yards away when I sprang toward my rude stone hut, which housed the m.d ray projector. An artificial thunder storm would not cause the space ship to land here. Actually it would drive it off, since lightning might ignite the fuel. But there was one chance.

"Tamar!" I shouted. "Izaak! Pol!"

I waved them into the hut. The others, struck by the rain of arrows and stones, were wounded. Slamming shut the filmsy door, I bent over the ray projector. With fingers made clumsy by haste, I reversed the terminals. When I first used the projector, I had employed it to slow down the molecules of water vapor, causing them to come together, just as a lowering of temperature might do. By reversing the terminals, I hoped to apply this force in exactly the opposite manner, speeding them up as heat does.

"Turn it!"

I pointed to the big armature of my motor, which in the first instance had been run by the power-pack of my gun. I realized that by manual labor alone I could get merely a trickle of power, but I was not attempting to create a storm. If the power were sufficient to give the ray a hundred-yard radius, my scheme might work. And if one molecule out of every million were affected, the results might prove conclusive.

My three primitive assistants sprang forward, began to spin the armature with all their strength. Hardly had they commenced work when there came a rain of blows at the door. It fell from its hinges.

In the doorway and covering the entire wild, rocky hilltop were the savage warriors of Yudia, their brass armor glinting dully in the gloom.

With one blinding movement I snatched up a sword Tamar had dropped, sprang toward the door. Two strokes sent the two men on the threshold reeling back. Then the world became a frenzy of slashing spears, sweating bodies. The cool logic of our race left me. I became as primitive as my attackers, fighting desperately in the darkness. I had thought myself far removed from such wild emotions, but now a furious atavistic delirium seized me.

I remember shouting, giving a berserk laugh as I lashed out with the sword. Because of my more powerful muscles, the sharp steel hewed through bone and armor. I remember many disjointed, terrifying pictures—a handless warrior staring at the stump of his wrist—the gurgle of one of the primitives as my sword pierced his throat — the dark and bloody mass before the door of the hut.

As I fought, Tamar and the others

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behind me labored feverishly to keep the wheel turning. I could hear the whir of the armature, the panting of my followers as they spun it. But I could not follow the flight of the space ship. There was no chance to look up, with the furious mass of warriors pressing in at me.

Panting, exhausted, I whirled the sword in a glittering barrier before me, somehow keeping back the flood of hairy bodies. Unless my scheme worked I was doomed, and my followers with me. My own life did not matter. They had chosen to fight beside me, and I resolved not to make them pay with their lives for their friendship.

"Light!" old Izak cried behind me. "Light!"

I parried a spear-thrust that came darting snakelike toward me, glanced over my shoulder. It was a blunder, for another Yudian warrior lashed out at my throat. He missed only because he tripped over the heap of slain before the door. But in that moment I had seen enough to cause my heart to leap.

Above the rude copper machinery, in the path of the m.d. projector, a golden, diffused light was visible as if the air itself were aglow. That was precisely the case. By speeding up the molecules of air through the hand-powered projector, we had excited them to luminosity.

WHIRLING back to the relentless give-and-take in the doorway, I fought with increased fury. The golden air behind me was spreading slowly but inexorably. Within a few minutes an area of some fifty feet about the hut was alive with the sourceless, shimmering light. Would those aboard the space ship see it? Would its illumination reveal the symbol set out in white stone—the symbol that any of our space men must recognize?

As the light spread about the hut, the brutish warriors fell back, their coarse faces panicky. I managed to get my breath. Only for a moment, though. As soon as they saw the light was harmless, they rushed forward to the attack once more with renewed determination. Again there was the ring of metal on metal, the fierce shouts of battle, while behind me Tamar and the others worked desperately.

It was impossible for me to hold out long against that horde pressing in from the darkness. A stone from a sling glanced off my forehead, stunning me. The sword fell from my grasp, I slumped to my knees. Vaguely I was aware of a huge, black-bearded warrior springing forward, his spear raised. I remember thinking what a strange, bitter end it was for me—death at the hands of barbarians on this fantastic world, and a rescue ship only a mile or so above!

And then, as the warrior's muscles were tightening, screaming, roaring sound came from the heavens. A red and fearful light lit up the entire hillside. Rockets flaring, the space ship was hurtling down toward my queer golden beacon!

"Fire," the big warrior muttered. "Fire from heaven come to scourge us."

Dropping his spear, he turned and fled. Nor was he alone. Panic had swept the horde of primitives. Flinging aside their weapons, howling with terror as the fire-breathing "monster" swooped down, they took to their heels.

In what seemed like a dream, the *Silver Star* landed. Her air-locks swung open, and Captain Agnor and the crew were shaking my hand, firing questions at me.

When I could break free of them, I turned to the boy Tamar, took my tattered cloak and threw it about his shoulders.

"I return to my home now," I said. "This shall be a parting gift and perhaps a symbol. Let your people know you from now on not as Tamar, but as Yly-shah, or 'delivered by Ylyga.' Keep your faith in the wisdom of the Great Creator and strive always for peace and reason, for through them alone will your people become great." I placed a hand on his shoulder, for I had grown fond of the young barbarian. "Farewell, my son. I must go back to—the stars."

So it all is ended. You know by now

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that Captain Agnor and the others wished to remain there, to study the world upon which they had just landed. I take full responsibility for the immediate departure of the *Silver Star*.

In the first place, my notes and specimens of flora and fauna give complete data on this planet. More than that, it is my firm conviction that we must leave this world alone. Its inhabitants are close enough to our own race to be permitted their own evolution, their own progress, without our interference. If we colonized, they would hate us and there would be useless killing. They have the right to choose their destiny.

As I set down these words, I can glance through the *Silver Star's* observation port, see the blue planet and its lone satellite sinking away beneath us. It is my hope that some day its people will overcome their savage emotionalism, adopt clear, cool logic in its place, and rise to great heights. When we do return, I hope they will meet us as equals. Perhaps the boy Tamar and the others will spread my teachings of logic and faith to the eventual overthrow of that madness in the blood of his people.

So, on the fifth day of the month Thex, ends this journal.

* * *

THUS wrote Ylyga Jactor, the Venusian, in his report to the Council of Scientists at the vast metropolis of Kylis.

On Earth, old Izak the scribe bent over his voluminous rolls of parchment, ending his record of the strange events that had befallen Judea with these words:

"Elijah, the believer in God, bade farewell to his disciples, telling them to have faith, revealing to them the future. And there came a chariot of fire and in it he ascended to Heaven."

COMING NEXT ISSUE

WHO WAS THOMAS MORROW?

A Story of a Visitation from the Void

By ROBERT MOORE WILLIAMS

FIVE AFTER FIVE

A Story of the World's Dawn

By MAURICE RENARD

and many others!

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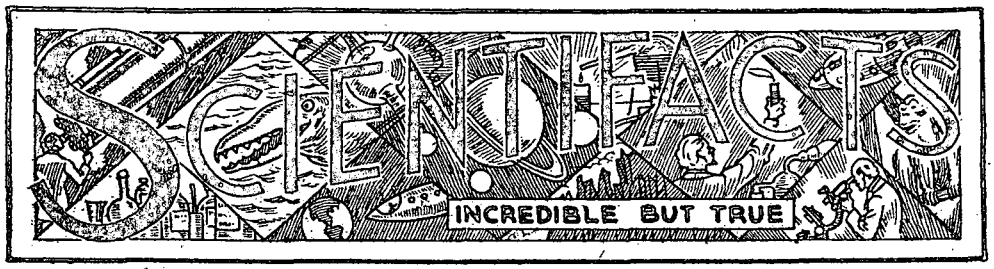

A SPECIAL FEATURE OF INTERESTING ODDITIES
by MORT WEISINGER

SCIENCE RIDES THE RANGE

PSYCHOLOGY is saving cattlemen a fortune!

A single wire, hung between slender posts, may be enough to keep the cow of the future in her pasture if cows are psychologically conditioned.

The conditioning is being brought about by subjecting the animal to a mild electric shock every time she contacts the wire, which bounds the pasture. After repeatedly experiencing a shock every time she touches the wire, the cow learns to keep away from it.

Psychology can thus save the cattleman and farmer the enormous costs of iron fences necessary to keep his herds from straying.

MACHINE MAIL

AND now they've robot-ized the mails!

A coin-operated post-office, called the Mailomat, has been intriguing

commuters and others with letters to mail at the last minute in both of New York's great terminals.

This machine is, in reality, a self-service post-office, for if the letter is dropped in with a coin the machine prepays postage and postmarks the letter. No stamps are necessary and it is not necessary to run the mail collected from this box through the canceling machine at the post-office.

NEVER IN 300 LIFETIMES!

HEREDITY rules — despite science's attempt to change a fly!

Fifteen years ago a normal fruitfly of the species Drosophila was mated to a female with degenerate wings. From their descendants a similar pair was chosen and mated, the male normal in every respect, the female with vestigial wings.

The procedure was repeated for 300 generations, the equivalent of 9,000 years of human life, yet today the genes that produce normal wings in this fly are still functioning, stubbornly refusing to be bred out of existence or changed in their action.

DON'T READ THIS ON FRIDAY

SCIENCE scoffs at superstition. But—

The reluctance of seamen to sail on a Friday reached such proportions that many years ago the British government decided to take strong measures in proving the fallacy of the superstition.

They laid the keel of a new vessel on Friday, launched her on a Friday, named her H.M.S. *Friday*. Then they placed her in command of a Captain Friday, and sent her to sea on a Friday.

The scheme worked fine, and had only one drawback—neither ship nor crew was ever heard of again!

NATURE'S BLITZKRIEG

THE chameleon is Nature's fastest creature!

A seven-inch chameleon can capture

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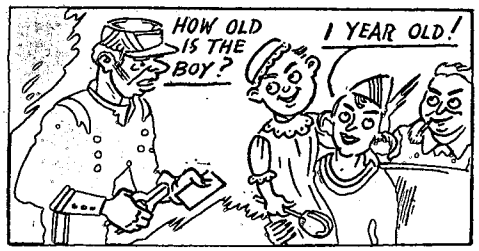
a fly 12 inches away without moving. His artillery consists of a tongue longer than himself, a lightning-like sticky-tipped weapon which is shot out of the mouth in much the same way a watermelon seed can be shot from between the fingers.

Ring-shaped muscles contracting suddenly on a slippery, spike-like bone send the tongue forward.

TROUBLE AHEAD

THE year 3000 will not be a leap year!

Even leap years can be leaped. It's all due to necessary adjustments to



correct the Gregorian rule that is responsible for our calendar. To determine which year is a leap year, remember these rules: Every year the number of which is divisible by 4 is a leap year, excepting the last year of each century, which is a leap year only when the number of the century is divisible by 4.

A person born on February 29, 2996, will have to wait eight years before he can celebrate his first birthday!

BLOOD BANKS

A POWDER resembling powdered milk but with the vital properties of red blood is the new life-saving aid U.S. Army surgeons hope to have the next time American soldiers go into battle. Supplies of this powder, made of blood plasma, which can be safely stored for long periods, will replace the necessity for type-hunting in blood transfusions, and will serve as veritable "blood banks."

LIFE BEGINS AT?

MAN is never too old to succeed. Scientists' researches indicate that seventy per cent of the work of the world is done before 45, and eighty percent before 50. The best period in the age of man is the fifteen years between 30 and 45.

Mathematicians reach their peak performance as a group at 35; physicists, between 30 and 34; astronomers, between 40 and 44; inventors of great inventions, between 30 and 35; the writers of best short stories, from 30 to 34; and the writers of literary masterpieces of first rank do their outstanding work between 40 and 44 years of age.

INVISIBLE INVADERS

MAN'S smallest enemy measures 10 millimicrons in diameter!

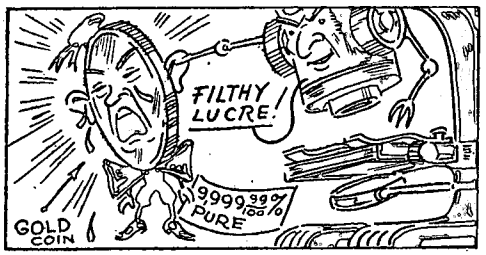
According to latest micro-biologist's reports, the size of filterable viruses can be measured. The smallest virus of all is that of the foot-and-mouth disease which measures only 10 millimicrons in diameter. The largest is psittacosis virus with a diameter of 275 millimicrons. A millimicron is a millionth of a millimeter.

One of these invisible foes can result in death to its human host!

NO PERFECT METAL

THERE is no pure metal!

No metal has ever been made so pure that the spectroscope could not detect impurities in it. Even the superfine, extra-pure, 1000-proof gold



which is the basis of the currencies of many countries is found to contain much atomic dirt under the revealing eye which sees through atoms.

Guess that's what they mean by pay-dirt!

THIS INCREDIBLE WORLD

THREE pounds of food and four pounds of water a day will keep the body functioning, but these would be of little use without 34 pounds of air daily. . . . . If all the buildings in the U.S. were brought together, they would cover an area of about 35 miles square. . . . A few lighted cigarettes

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can quickly fill an ordinary room with smoke, but the particles are so tiny that it would take 320 cigarettes—16 packs—to make one ounce of smoke particles. . . . A modern plane doing a power dive is moving as fast as a revolver bullet. . . .

An electric eel may discharge as much as 1,000 watts of electricity at a voltage of 600. This discharge is at the frequency of 200 or 300 times a second. . . . The popular idea that bulls fight when they see red has long been exploded. The bulls are color-blind. It is the movement, not the color, that infuriates. . . .

Since the foundation of the oil industry, the entire world's production of crude oil would not fill a hole a cubic mile in the Earth. . . . Approximately 60 percent of the food of all birds consists of insects. . . . On an average, 16,000,000 tons of water evaporate every single second over the surface of the Earth. . . . The life span of the halibut is about the same as for humans. . . . Cats have only one type of blood.

HEADLINERS IN THE NEXT ISSUE

GET ready for twelve scientifiction masterpieces a year!

Next month's issue of THRILLING WONDER STORIES marks the inauguration of a brand-new scientifiction policy—a policy designed to supply you with the outstanding works of fantasy literature by the world's greatest writers!

The greatest fantasy classics are the long novels. Jules Verne's immortal stories, H. G. Wells' unforgettable classics, and H. Rider Haggard's famous books all uphold that truth. These veteran fantasy writers wrote masterpieces—because they told their stories on a broad canvas.

In contemporary scientifiction, we have taken a lesson from the old masters. Each issue of STARTLING STORIES features a book-length fantasy novel. And, judging from the success of the novels we have already published, this policy is a popular one.

The best stories are the longest ones, we repeat. It is in recognition of that fact that we have decided henceforth to publish one complete book-length novel in every issue. Already we have lined up masterpieces of fantasy by such popular authors as John Taine, Edmond Hamilton, Willard E. Hawkins, and others. Each of these fantasy novels slated for future appearance is a scientifiction treat from start to finish. Stories that will be listed in the Hall of Fame of tomorrow!

Excellent short stories will still appear in THRILLING WONDER STORIES. For the length of all forthcoming novels will be a compromise between the novel featured in this issue and the big ones published in STARTLING STORIES. Each issue of the new T.W.S. will feature a half dozen outstanding short stories by the most popular authors in the field!

* * * * *

FAMOUS author Henry Kuttner is represented in the April issue with an unusually powerful book-length novel, THE LAND OF TIME TO COME. It's a magnificent story of a world that lost track of itself . . . of a day when man has lost his most precious faculty—memory. Man has forgotten everything . . . his science, his customs, his hates and loves. Only one thing survives in this strange new world of amnesia—man's struggle for existence.

THE LAND OF TIME TO COME is a brilliant chronicle of a civilization that forgot. But you'll be remembering it for years to come.

* * * * *

MANY short stories by favorite authors in the April issue. Eando Binder gives us MYSTERY WORLD, an interplanetary story that offers something new in scientifiction—an astronomical guessing-game! The locale of MYSTERY WORLD is kept hidden from the reader until the very end. You will be supplied with astronomical clues to help you solve the identity of the world or satellite in the SOLAR SYSTEM that is the background of the story. Polish your telescope eye-pieces now . . . . for MYSTERY WORLD offers a riddle of the first magnitude!

* * * * *

LISTEN to the tale of woe of a scientifiction writer of the future in Clifford D. Simak's hilarious story of a scribe of tomorrow, EARTH FOR INSPIRATION. A fantasy author for the magazines of tomorrow, published on some other world, because Earth has become cold and barren, receives rejection slip after rejection slip. The editors tell him that his local color is corny. So the author goes back to EARTH FOR INSPIRATION.

* * * * *

INTERNATIONALLY famous Maurice Renard spins a time-traveling tale of world's dawn in his short story, FIVE AFTER FIVE, also included in the next issue. It's a story of the prehistoric past come to life—with some startling results.

* * * * *

ROBERT MOORE WILLIAMS does the story illustrated on the cover of the April issue—WHO WAS THOMAS MORROW? It's a dramatic account of a visitation from the void. Here's a swell yarn that will keep you thinking long after you have finished reading it.

* * * * *

OTHER distinctive stories by famous fantasy favorites in the next issue of THRILLING WONDER STORIES. And our regular star-parade of exclusive science features!

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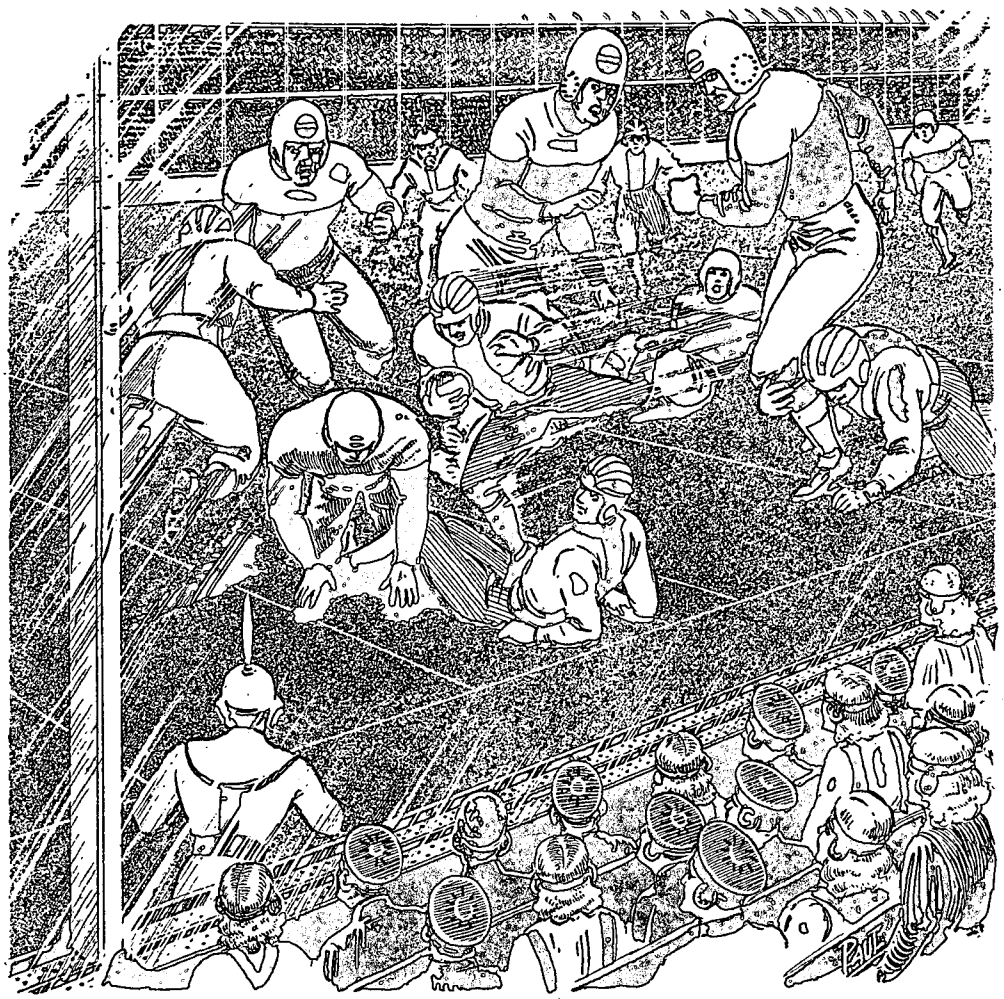
PLASTIC PIGSKIN DAZE

By WILLIAM MORRISON

Author of "Crystal Death," "The Thirteenth Moon," etc.



I rocketed into the Equator team with a fury that startled them

Romance Throws a Future Footballer for a Loss—Till a Scientist Makes Victory for Polar Tech His Goal!

OUR right guard and tackle had opened up a hole between two of the eighteen-foot theta giants on the opposite team. Before it had a chance to close up again, I was through like a space rocket and running for a touchdown. Then I heard a whistle.

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"Get off the field!" Coach Morley shouted to me. "From now on, you're on the varsity."

I grinned as I took off my helmet. I had always been regarded in my family as something of a shrimp. My father was close to thirteen feet, and even my mother was over twelve. But I was hardly ten. Among us kappas, ten feet made me a midget. That was why I got a thrill to know I could win a place on the Pacific team, competing with normal-sized players.

At the time I'm writing about, you may remember that there were only fourteen different races of men, not counting sub-races. They all differed in height, weight and strength. Perhaps if I had been classified according to the newer standards, I might have been rated as a tall epsilon instead of a short kappa. But seeing that all my family and my relatives were kappas, it was only natural to regard me as one. At any rate, I knew how to take care of myself with taller people.

A hand slapped me on the back, a little below the shoulder-blade. I looked down. It was varsity quarterback Donald Myers, an alpha of the seven-foot variety.

"Good luck, Jeff," he congratulated me. "I'm glad you made it."

I knew he was sincere about what he said, and that pleased me. The other alpha with him said:

"Ah—is it of great importance?"

That was Professor Horace Myers, Donald's father. He taught parachemistry over at North Polar Tech, so he knew as little as most professors about the world he lived in, probably even less. Being located at the best attended university on Earth didn't seem to teach him much.

"It certainly is important, Professor Myers," I explained. "Being on the varsity means that I get my education free. I receive an unlimited supply of learning-receptor pills, so I can sit in on any lecture and absorb knowledge simply by listening. And I get my food tablets paid for up to the amount of six thousand calories per day, which is enough for any man, no matter how hard he works."

"And study devices?"

"I'm not allowed to study chemistry or physics while I'm asleep," I admitted. "That would interfere with my rest, and hurt my playing ability."

"That's reasonable," he agreed. "This sleep-learning always seemed to me a lazy man's method anyway. The knowledge doesn't stick."

AN alpha girl had come down out of the stands, and Donald Myers excused himself. Professor Myers and I smiled at each other. The girl was one of our prettiest cheer leaders, Lana Bryce. If a certain obstacle could be shoved out of the way, she would soon become Mrs. Donald Myers. The obstacle, of course, was Willis Crane.

"I remember vaguely that my great-grandfather used to talk of a game called football," Professor Myers said abstractedly. "He had never seen an exhibition, but he had heard of it. That, however, was when I was a child and he was already an old man. Was this ancient amusement anything like the game you play?"

"Our present game is derived from it," I replied. "As different types of men have developed, we've had to change the rules. The men in the line are chosen chiefly for strength, so the thetas are used. They're fed pituitary and other hormones to give them a little more height than the ordinary thetas, who, of course, are usally about fourteen feet. Our linemen are eighteen. Above that, the pituitary results in loss of strength."

"Naturally I remember, since I'm professor of parachemistry," he said, offended.

"Well, the backs are usually kappas," I added hastily. "Not so bulky, but powerful, and built to take punishment. The quarterback, though, is an alpha, because he has to be smaller and faster."

"And the playing territory?"

"The field is three hundred yards by a hundred. The plastic ball is two feet in length. The old system of shouting signals or giving them in a huddle would be entirely impracticable. That's why we have radio receivers in our helmets, adjusted to a special wave length assigned to our quarterback."

"Quite interesting," he muttered as he drifted away.

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Pretty soon Donald came back from talking to Lana Bryce.

"Did she set a date, Donald?" I asked.

He looked at me peculiarly.

"That depends on you."

"On me? Why, I never spoke two words to Lana!"

"On you and on the rest of the team. It depends on how we make out in our games."

I whistled. That seemed to me to be carrying college spirit a little too far.

"And if Willis Crane's team from Equator does better than we do, she'll marry him?"

"I guess so."

I felt funny about it, and so did the rest of the team when they heard the news. But we all decided that if it was up to us, Donald would marry the girl. We would play our heads off, down to our last erg of energy.

Our first game, with Lower Mexico, was supposed to be easy. Before we went out on the field, I remember I was arguing with one of our theta linemen about what the score would be. The trainers had fed him intelligence pills, to make sure he wouldn't mess up his signals during the game. Lord knows, he needed his wits. Then they gave him his strength and endurance tablets, which weren't so necessary.

Now as he lay basking in the glow of an infra-neutrino machine, getting his muscles ray-hardened, he said:

"We'll beat them with sixty points to spare."

"I figure on forty," I argued.

"Sixty," he insisted, and went on to tell me how good we were and what weak opposition we would meet.

WHEN we went out on the field, both bands had finished parading. Lower Mexico had a Martian flame-bear cub as a mascot, and all the women were making soft little noises about it. When the animal finally was taken out of the way the game began.

Lower Mexico kicked off. Our left half caught the ball on the bounce and started to run it back. He was a kappa like myself, but a couple of feet taller, and he had the strength of a Venusian land-whale. All the same, he should have known better than to let himself get boxed in by a couple of opposing theta men. They fell on him like atomic bombs materializing out of the stratosphere, and he collapsed with a bang.

When the referee blew his ultra-sonic whistle, that set the little sound transformers in our helmets shrieking, but the left half didn't get up.

Our doctor ran out onto the field, and this dumb kappa groaned.

"Why did you do a crazy thing like outrunning your intereference?" Donald Myers asked. "You knew you couldn't get away with it."

The kappa reddened. "I guess I wasn't thinking. I guess I—I swallowed my intelligence pill without chewing it."

College men weren't allowed to use profanity, but I could imagine what Don was saying to himself. The doctor had been giving the kappa a quick going-over, and now he pronounced judgment.

"Right leg not broken, but several muscles badly sprained. Contusions on left leg. Strained tendons—"

He went on for a few seconds. There was a dangerous look on Don's face, for the kappa would be unable to play for several games.

"Don't tell me you forgot to take your ray-hardening with the infra-neutrino machine," Don said grimly. "Your muscles should have been able to stand up better than this."

"I think I was in a hurry, and I didn't take the full treatment."

Well, they put in a substitute and the game went on. But that will give you an idea of what was wrong with our team—plain overconfidence. Once the game got going, the men lost it fast enough and began to get the panicky feeling that they might not even win. Things didn't turn out that bad, but we were lucky to come through by a single touchdown.

After the game, Professor Myers came down to see his son. With him was another old-timer, whom he introduced.

"Professor Alfred Crane, lecturer in radiology at North Polar Tech."

Professor Crane knew his way around a lot better than Professor Myers did. I could tell that by one look

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at him. He had a shrewd glint in his eyes that reminded me of a cobra-cat trying to make up its mind whether or not to sink its fangs into someone.

He coughed. "I believe Equator has by now finished its game with Polynesia U. My son Willis, as you know, is quarterback, so I am rather interested in the score. Er—do you mind?"

NOBODY minded, and he turned on the televisor. Equator had won its game by seventy-three to nothing, and maybe that didn't make us feel rotten. Willis Crane's too-handsome mug sprang into view.

"Hello, Willis," his father said. "Are you all right?"

"Sure, Dad. It was easy. We used our third and fourth string the last half of the game." He grinned. "The whole team is just aching for the chance to walk over the mercaptanous Pacific outfit that Don Myers masterminds. When we're through with it, it'll have as much life left as a thermophilic earthworm at absolute zero."

Don's jaws clamped shut hard.

"You dirty equator-rat!" he said. "When you get that chance you're looking for, you'll be as sorry as if you had monkeyed with a proton ray."

"Boys, boys!" Professor Myers interrupted mildly.

"Maybe you think you're getting married this year," Willis sneered. "You give me a laugh. Why, when we get through wiping up that outfit of yours, no girl'll look at you. What makes you think Lana will marry you?"

"Come out of there, you coward!" Don shouted. "If you've got the nerve of a Martian plant insect—"

Professor Crane touched a switch, and Willis faded from view.

"I'm sorry," Crane said. "I had no idea, Professor Myers, that Donald and Willis were on such bad terms. There seems to be a girl involved, doesn't there?"

"There certainly does," I remarked.

"The hot-headedness of youth," commented Myers. "And I had thought that our modern children were so well conditioned emotionally. Perhaps we overemphasize physics and chemistry. How much happier the world would be if every young man between fifteen and seventy were forced to take a daily half-hour treatment of soothing eupeptic rays! There would be no excitement, no unpleasant quarrels, no disturbances of the peace."

"And no life," I added.

Donald wasn't paying us any attention. He was probably thinking of what he wanted to do to Willis Crane.

"Fortunately, Professor Crane, you and I can regard the matter quite calmly," his father said. "May the better man win the girl."

"Of course. Certainly." Professor Crane smiled, convinced that his son was the better man.

I've given you something of an idea of the troubles our team had in store for it. In our next game, with Lunar Agricultural—a small school that didn't even take its football seriously—we managed to roll up a better score. But even there we didn't exactly shine. In the middle of the game, one of our ends was standing on the goal line after a run of two hundred and fifty yards. Waiting for a forward pass to sink into his outstretched arms, he simply collapsed. It looked as if someone had turned a beam of electrons on him.

But that wasn't what had happened. The doctor diagnosed the reason as nothing more than his being out of condition.

Don was bewildered.

"It doesn't make sense," he complained. "He gets his calories at the training table. He sleeps enough. He doesn't overstudy, takes his intelligence pills regularly, has his muscles ray-conditioned. I don't get it."

THEN the truth came out. This particular theta was a glutton who spent most of his spare hours eating. Not real food that would add calories to his diet, or show up as fat. He ate the new caloryless synthetic mixtures, loaded with old-time flavor to simulate the tastes that once were so popular. It seemed that he had an inordinate fondness for Lunar steak and Marsberry ice-cream.

I like steak and ice-cream myself, but I couldn't see myself eating them for hours on end, especially when I had already had a regular meal. And none

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of these imitation foods do any good to an athlete.

That discovery did its bit toward demoralizing the team. In the next game, something else happened. This time it was my own fault.

We had been going along much better than usual until the middle of the first half. I had been making a monkey out of the opposing right end on practically every play. After awhile he got fed up with being outsmarted by a kappa, and took a swing at me.

He was five feet taller than I, but that didn't stop me. I smacked him right in the stomach. That was where the fight ended. The referee got an idea of what was going on and gave us both a dose of paralyzing rays.

I must have got a little too much of it, because I was still feeling numb when they put me in the line-up for the next play. I was supposed to carry the ball, but I moved a little slowly. Before I knew it, I had been hit hard. The ball slipped out of my fingers and was quickly recovered by the opposing side. It gave them their first touchdown, built up their confidence, and threw us into a panic.

We were lucky to win that game by a single point instead of the thirty we had counted on.

That's the way it went all season. We were a good team, far better than any of our opponents, but we always seemed lucky to win. Meanwhile Equator went merrily along, bowling over all opposition by tremendous scores, and boasting of what they would do to us when they met us.

The funny thing was that I was sure all along that ours was the better team. The other players seemed to feel that way, too, and then there was the fact that Equator and Pacific were traditional rivals. No matter what the scores had been during the rest of the season, the result was always a toss-up when these two met. If anything else was needed to make us play our best, there was Lana Bryce.

I saw her before the game. Don Myers and Willis Crane would probably have liked to have a private little chat with her, but neither one was leaving the field open for the other. Whatever chatting there was had to be done in public. All the same, you could tell by the way both of them looked at her that each one was counting on her being on his side.

COACH Morley stepped into the room.

"Don, the team will be needing you five minutes from now," he said.

"I'll be there, Coach," Don promised.

"Don't forget your intelligence pills and your ray-hardening," Willis Crane sneered. "When our linemen slam into you, you'll need them."

"Please, boys, don't quarrel now," Lana pleaded. "For my sake."

Don gritted his teeth.

"It's a good thing you asked that, Lana, or I'd have left this blowhard looking as if a Lunar butcher-bird had been making a meal off his face."

"You and an army of thetas, maybe," retorted Willis.

I could see that his temper was getting beyond control.

"The w[illegible]it looks to me," I remarked, "both you fellows could stand a day's baking in eupeptic rays. Calm down and save your energy for the game."

"Yes," agreed Lana. "If you do your fighting here, I'll never look at either of you again."

She shook hands with Willis first, and then with Don. When she left them, they separated in a hurry.

Professor Myers was in our dressing room, looking on with interest at the preparations for the game.

"Perhaps you didn't imagine, Professor," Coach Morley said, "that our preparations were so elaborate. Actually we spare no pains to get the men in shape."

Professor Myers shook his head.

"What surprises me," he replied, "is something your preparations omit."

The look on Coach Morley's face showed that he hadn't the slightest idea what Professor Myers meant. But the Professor had already forgotten he was having a conversation and was now busily examining one of the helmets, Coach Morley smiled, shrugged his shoulders and turned away to make sure that nobody was slipping up on any of the pre-game treatments.

There was an audience of a half-million people out in the stands, in addi-

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tion to the tens of millions who would watch the game by television. Both Pacific and Equator had plenty of alumni on the other planets, chiefly Mars and Venus, and the television was interplanetary for that reason. But say what you will for broadcasting, there's nothing like being right there on the scene when the game is going on.

The rows of spectator seats were practically shut off from the field as far as sound was concerned. But since the quarterback's signals were radioed anyway, that didn't make much difference.

They could see beautifully by the new air-layer magnifying system. Layers of transparent gases, at different pressures and temperatures, were placed in front of the stands, prevented from mixing by plastex windows. The refractive indices of the different layers varied with pressure and temperature, and the whole effect was a gigantic lens system that brought the players practically into each spectator's lap.

The device was effective. Besides, what appealed especially to the stadium manager was that it was inexpensive.

You couldn't have found a professional gambler with a cosmoscope. The boys with sporting blood had been avoiding college football from the day they discovered the game could no longer be fixed.

Once, long ago, they had been able to control the flight of the ball with a powerful energy radiation set placed outside the stadium. But after a time, that little trick had been discovered and rendered valueless. They had tried other things since then, but the college authorities had been a step ahead of them. Eventually they had learned to avoid the stadium. All betting now was strictly amateur.

THE game started with Equator kicking off. There was the usual fifty-mile-an-hour artificial breeze, changed every quarter. It was in our favor just then, so the Equator kick fell pretty short. I grabbed the ball on the bounce, slowed down to wait for my theta interference, and then set off diagonally down the field.

A couple of Equator kappas slipped past my interference and dived at me together. I eluded the first one, but the second got his fingers on my right ankle. That slowed me up sufficiently for the thetas to get to me. Practically the whole Equator team piled on.

I knew it was going to be a rough game. Luckily, though, it was so long since the season had started that we were all thoroughly ray-hardened by this time. If those boys wanted to play rough, we could hand out a little better than we received.

We lined up for the first play, and I could hear Don's signals snapping confidently through my helmet. His voice was sharp and tense. There was a lift to it that would send a halfback through a line with a little added energy that even a strength tablet wouldn't give.

We began to shift. Two thetas dropped back out of the line. The other kappa and I moved behind them and a little to the left. Don and the fullback took up positions behind us. Behind our forward wall of thetas, the Equator team could only guess what was going on. There was another shift, the ball was snapped, and Don was plunging around left end.

He made twenty yards before being downed by an opposing kappa, and we lined up for the next play full of confidence. We swept down to the last quarter of the field, and then we lost the ball. But we felt that we were the better team. We knew that before the game was over, we would prove it.

Equator had a tricky set of hidden-ball plays. But our boys had been taking their intelligence pills faithfully, and our line was a durmetal wall. The half ended with the ball fifteen yards from Equator's goal line, and they were fighting desperately to hold off a score.

Coach Morley didn't waste our time telling us what was wrong with us, for each man on the team was playing his best. We spent the few minutes we had under hardening-ray machines, with a small amount of eupeptic rays thrown in. Too much eupeptic will kill your ambition, but there's nothing like a quick shot of it to make you feel swell.

We ran out to the field for the second half, convinced that we could lick all nine worlds. I noticed that Professor Myers seemed to be taking a surprisingly great interest in the game. He

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was sitting right beside Morley when the coach settled down on the bench with the reserves.

Five minutes after the beginning of the second half, the break came. We had taken the ball on our goal line and run it back fifty yards, apparently out of danger. Don's voice began to snap out instructions for a shift. Suddenly we lost track of what he was saying!

SOMETHING had snapped out of the ether into our helmets. Instead of Don's voice, all we could hear was that irritating crackling. I could see the linemen ahead of me half-turn around uneasily, wanting to know what it was all about. But before they could decide what to do, Don's voice came through clearly with one word.

"Ball!"

The center snapped the ball automatically. The rest of us, caught out of position, didn't know what to do with ourselves. The Equator team came charging in. I found myself hit by a couple of kappas who struck at the same time.

When I picked myself off the ground, I groaned in misery. The ball had been planted in back of our own goal line by a grinning Equator theta.

Don called time out and tried to discover what had happened. At first we were so mad, he couldn't get us to stop talking all at once.

We tried to tell the referee and umpire that something had gone wrong with our helmet radio set. But they just looked skeptical, and said there was nothing they could do about it. They knew all the precautions that were being taken against gamblers, and they also knew that the helmets were supposed to be interference-proof. I guess they had a reason for not believing us.

Out on our bench, Coach Morley and Professor Myers realized something was screwy. They came running to the edge of the field.

Coach Morley looked dazed when he heard our story, but Professor Myers didn't.

"Ah, yes," he said.

Then he demanded an extended time-out period. When he got it, he began to fuss with our helmet sets. It took him a minute or two to adjust all of them. After that he gave us each a brown pill to take.

"For auditory improvement," he explained. We swallowed his word and the pills at the same time. He beamed at us. "I believe you'll have no difficulty in hearing now."

He went back to his seat on the bench. I supposed that was one of the omitted preparations he had referred to before the game.

The play started again, with our team a touchdown behind. In spite of what Professor Myers had said, most of us were uneasy. If that same radio interference came on again, we were going to be in a bad way.

But when we got the ball again for our next play, we knew there was going to be no radio interference. For Don's voice came to us with a clarity and drive such as we had never heard before. And along with the directions for play, he delivered a pep talk that surprised us.

"Shift one, kappas back. Come on, boys, make it snappy. We've got to win this game. We can't afford to lose. Shift two, thetas to the left. Come Mars and high water, I'm going to marry Lana. I'll shoot myself if we don't win this game. Shift three—ball!"

WE rocketed into that Equator team with a fury that startled them. I was carrying the ball. Before they pulled me down, I had gone fifty yards. I could see the Equator backs staring at each other, wondering what had happened to us.

"Play seventy-three, space ship formation. They got that touchdown of theirs by a dirty trick, but we'll get it back and plenty more. Lord—I don't know what I'll do if I lose Lana. Shift one. I'll shoot myself, and Crane, too. Shift two—ball!"

That set our team in motion, and we didn't stop that play until we had scored a touchdown. The ease with which we had tied the score stunned the crowd. The Equator team was so quiet and discouraged, they looked as if a little eupeptic raying would do them good.

Don's voice was barking in our ears.

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"You can't stop now. I've got to marry Lana! Another touchdown, quick. Rocket play number one. Shift one—"

We scored that other touchdown for him, and two more! The Equator team went to pieces. They kept fighting doggedly but hopelessly to keep the score down, with no hope of winning. When the referee blew the final whistle, we were on our way to a fifth touchdown.

As we rushed off the field, Professor Myers stopped us.

"You had no difficulty in hearing this time, did you, gentlemen?"

"Difficulty?" I blurted. "We heard clear as a bell! You certainly fixed those helmets right, Professor Myers. And those pills—"

"Of course, the pills." He smiled. "I knew before the game that Professor Crane took his son's hope of victory pretty much to heart, and might even descend to unscrupulous methods to help him. For that reason, your radio interference was not too much of a surprise to me. Professor Crane is a specialist in radiology. Of late he has been experimenting with eka-mesothorium, which decomposes to release emanations whose effects are practically impossible to avoid by ordinary methods."

"Those pills of yours certainly got the better of him," I said earnestly. "I never heard anything so clearly in my life as I heard Don's voice."

"Those pills," said Professor Myers gently, "were a mixture of psychane and metapsychane. I am, as you know, professor of parachemistry. My particular science deals with the chemical effects involved in the production and reception of thought transference waves. The psychane mixture increased Don's ability to transmit and your own ability to receive. It was necessary, as you may imagine, to disconnect your helmets entirely."

"Then Don gave us our signals by telepathy."

"You might call it that."

SO that was the reason for that terrific drive of ours, that urge to win. In addition to the signals, we had been made super-sensitive to his inner thoughts, his own desperate desire to come through the game victorious!

I walked away from Professor Myers, and came to a stop before Don and Lana. There was a crowd around them, but they seemed to think they were alone.

"Why, certainly, Don," Lana was saying. "Of course I'd have married you whether you won or lost. I never could stand Willis Crane. I was just trying to give you a real incentive, to make sure you'd really try your best."

Tonight I'm loading up with intelligence pills and learning-receptor pills, and everything else modern science has to offer. I figure that if I study hard, maybe by the time I'm an old man of a hundred and twenty I'll understand something about women.

Featured in the March STARTLING STORIES: SOJARR OF TITAN, a Book-Length Novel by MANLY WADE WELLMAN • 15c Everywhere!

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DEAD END

By MALCOLM JAMESON

Author of "Prospectors of Space," "Deviation Unknown," etc.

Hugo Trellick Catches Up with the Past—Whereupon the Past Neatly Turns the Time-Tables!

"COME across with fifty grand, kid, or it's going to be just too bad." Dippy Moran held out the heavily stamped check. Outstanding among the cancelled endorsements were the fatal initials "N. S. F."

"Nuts," said Hugo Trellick, staring at it, "I thought . . ."

"Never mind what you thought. It's the coin we want—or else!"

"Or else what?"

"You know Joe. He don't stand for no welching. The last guy that tried it on him went for a ride. He got back, all right, but he won't ever look the same."

"I'll get the money," muttered Trellick, reaching for the check.

"Oh, no you don't," snorted Dippy. "I'm hanging on to this. What's more, I'm sticking with you until you pay off. Get it?"

Trellick sighed. There was an end to all good things, and this was one of them. The three one thousand dollar notes in his wallet and the rakish foreign built roadster outside the door were all that was left of the five million his father had left him a few years before. That fifty thousand dollar rubber check stood for his last effort to come back—it stood for part of his losses at Joe Hickleman's stud joint the night before. And the Hickleman gang had a hard reputation as bad debt collectors.

Dippy Moran's threatening gaze had

At that point the pirate's pistol spoke

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never left his face.

"Come on, then," said Trellick wearily.

"Where to?"

"I just remembered. My dad, before he croaked, staked a nut inventor. I've got a half interest in it—a time travel gadget. The old man thought there would be money in it."

"Yeah? Well, let's go see."

TRELLICK brought the car to a stop on the soft shoulder of the road in front of the secluded farm house.

"Wait here. This bozo's funny about visitors. I'll do better by myself."

He slid out of the driver's seat and pushed the gate in the hedge open. After the third battery of knocks the front door was grudgingly unlocked, and Dr. Otis peered out into the dark to see who his unwanted visitor was. He was a head taller than the dapper young spendthrift who stood on his threshold.

"Oh, it's you," he said, after a moment's scrutiny. Then, as if to shut the door, "I have nothing for you yet. The book on the Constitutional convention is not selling very well and I haven't finished my studies of Lincoln—"

"It's not chicken feed I want to talk about," said Trellick roughly, pushing in. "Real dough is what I'm after, and I want it now! I'm broke, and I gotta have a hundred grand before the week is out."

"Research, my young friend, does not produce results so fast."

Dr. Otis closed and relocked the door and led the way to his laboratory. He did not like the son and heir of the man who had backed him, but he felt that at least he had to be civil to him. "Moreover, the machine is not perfected yet. It works very badly at long ranges. Two centuries is positively the upper limit at the present."

"At that," growled Trellick, "you don't have to keep on mooning around with the junk you've been wasting time with. It took you six months to find out you couldn't hear what Isabella said to Columbus and another six to learn you couldn't look in on Shakespeare writing his plays to find out whether he really wrote 'em or not. As if anybody but a lot of old mossbacks gave a hoot! What about Sir Francis Drake and the pirate Morgan I wrote you about? Those guys swiped important money and buried it somewhere. What's wrong with looking that up?"

"Too far back, the images are fuzzy," said Dr. Otis quietly. "And it doesn't interest me," he added, with dignity.

"Oh, it doesn't interest you!" sneered Trellick, wheeling on him. "Well, it interests me, and like it or not, that's where we're going. How do you get into this thing?"

He referred to the cabinet that sat against the wall, hooked to a wall outlet by a simple electric cord. It had a pair of lenses, similar to those on a penny-in-the-slot peep show, for the eyes. Dangling beside them was a set of head-phones. Beneath, the front of the machine was studded with vari-colored knobs and verniers. Dr. Otis shook his head.

"I have told you repeatedly that this is no time travel machine. Such a thing is a logical impossibility, treated seriously only by half-cracked writers of fantasy. Such a machine would lead one at once into a hopeless paradox—"

"Never mind that bunk!" Trellick interrupted rudely. "What is it then? How does it work?"

"A Chronoscope, I call it," said Dr. Otis. "It consists of a set of scanners for both sight and sound that can be focused on any spot in space and at any point in time. Such an instrument can probe time in much the same manner as a telescope probes space, but since the object of its scrutiny is unaware of it, nothing is affected, as would be the case if a living man actually went back into the past. It is argued—"

TRELLICK was impatient. "Don't argue, get busy! Trot out that Drake and Morgan stuff I sent you."

"I don't like your tone, young man. The contract I signed with your father makes me the sole judge of what sections of the past should be studied. I've already told you—"

Bam!

Without warning Trellick swung on the bigger man, smashing a heavy right

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to the jaw. He followed instantly with a quick left jab, then jumped back.

"That for your contract," he said in a low, deadly voice. "Will you talk reason now, or do you want more of the same?"

But Dr. Otis, for all his being a scientist, was not so tractable as Trellick had hoped. Instead, he charged like a bull, his college-trained fists plunging like pistons. Trellick exchanged another pair of blows with him, then went over backward as he crashed into a chair. Otis squared away, panting with indignation, and waited for him to get up.

But Trellick could not forget that sitting out in the road was Dippy Moran, waiting not too patiently for his fifty thousand dollars. He struggled to his feet and warily approached Dr. Otis again. Again they tangled, and with a jarred skull and a fast closing right eye, Trellick was smashed to the floor again. When he was up that time he was even more cautious, for he knew that Otis was more than his match.

Casting about for a weapon, his eye caught the heavy ebony bookends on Dr. Otis's desk. He snatched one of them up and hurled it straight for the older man's head. It struck, corner first, squarely on the left temple. There was a dull moan, and the scientist crumpled. He lay where he fell, without a further sound or quiver of motion. Trellick slowly lowered the arm that was about to cast the other one of the bookends. His jaw dropped as an awesome fear crept over him. Then, hesitantly, he knelt and passed hasty hands over the crumpled body on the floor.

Dr. Otis was dead!

Appalled, Trellick shrank back. He had been a ne'er-do-well and a wastrel, but beyond petty vices he had not resorted to crime. And this was murder! They could hang you for that! Tremblingly, he rose to his feet, recalled that Dippy Moran, the inexorable collector of gambling losses, was waiting grimly for him outside.

Hastily Trellick hefted the Chronoscope. It was lighter than he thought, hardly forty pounds. It was self-contained. He jerked the wire from the base-plug and shortened it into a coil. He snatched up a set of papers from the doctor's desk and stuffed them into his pocket. Then he managed to get the Chronoscope onto his shoulders, and staggered with it to the door.

"Phew!" he gasped, as he set the instrument down onto the soft ground beside the car. "It's heavy, but here it is. Now let's get outa here!"

"I'll say you'd better, pal. I seen what you did through the window."

TRELLICK froze.

"You going to turn me in?"

"Don't be silly," said Dippy nonchalantly. "There ain't no reward been offered yet. When there is, it'll be up to you. The Boss'll find a hide-out for you — if you can pay the *rent*." Dippy put a world of meaning into the way he squeezed that last word out from between his teeth. Blackmail, that indicated.

"It was self-defense," objected Trellick, doggedly. "Anyhow, nobody knows I was there tonight outside of you."

"No?" Dippy's laugh was hollow mockery. "Not counting the million prints you probably left, how about these tire tracks? You gotta tread on this buggy that's different from anything I ever seen, and it's lying there in front of the house as plain as day. They'll have your number, kid, within an hour after the cops hit the place. All I gotta say is that this here radio gadget you swiped better be worth what you say it is, 'cause the Boss don't stick his neck out for charity!"

Trellick groaned. He was in for it now. This gang would suck him dry, no matter what vast treasures of the past he uncovered. Yet there was no choice. The other road led to the Death House and the noose. He shuddered.

"Let me drive," said Dippy, scornfully, as the fleeting car reacted to Trellick's jittery nerves.

JOE HICKLEMAN proved skeptical.

"A fat help, that!" he sneered, looking down on Trellick who was sweating with the Chronoscope. The Boss turned disgustedly to his henchmen.

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"Get Tony up here and have this cockeyed television gadget busted up—he ought to be able to get something for the parts. Then take this guy down to Bug's place, give him a good shellacking, and lock him up until the circulars are out. We may get something out of him yet, if it's only a deal with the D.A."

"No!" screamed Trellick, cringing at the thought of what was coming to him. "Give me time, that's all."

"You said you'd find Captain Kidd's treasure, but all I can see is fog and static."

"It's too far back—1698 or thereabouts. The Earth was billions of miles from here then, and there are too many cosmic rays between."

"Whadda I care what the alibi is?" demanded the Boss. "You promised dough, and you ain't produced in a week. Come on Patsy, grab him—"

"Wait!" wailed Trellick, grabbing at straws in desperation. "I'll prove to you the machine is a real time searcher. Is there anything that happened lately that you'd like to get the lowdown on?"

"Yeah," said Joe, after a moment's thought. "I'd like to know what rat tipped the cops off about that Rawlinson job. We knew who one of 'em was, and bumped him off, but I can't figure who else."

Trellick tuned in the coordinates of Police Headquarters on the night of March 18th. He shifted the height control, and the laterals, as he searched room by room. Presently he came to a room with five cops in it and a sweating man seated under a bright light.

"Does this guy mean anything to you?" asked Trellick, stepping back and motioning Joe Hickleman to step to the eye-pieces.

"I'll say he does," growled the Boss, grabbing for the head-phones. "It's Slippery Ellis—*shhhh!*"

For three hours Hickleman sat, listening intently, hearing question and answer, word for word. But it only took him the first ten minutes to make up his mind.

He turned abruptly from the machine and beckoned Patsy.

"Get Slippery—he's the one. Give him Number Six, the old brickyard technique. Scram!" Then he turned calmly back to the drama being enacted in Headquarters.

"Yeah," he said complacently, as the scene terminated. "You got something there. I can see a lotta ways to use a machine like that. But I ain't forgetting you owe me fifty grand, and besides that I'm compounding a felony. So go back to your gold-digging. You got a month. *Then—*"

The Boss raised his brows and bulged his eyes ominously. It was his final ultimatum.

"Yessir," stammered Trellick, and heaved the first breath that could be called easy since he had become these gangsters' prisoner. Hickleman and his cohorts left the room.

After they had gone, Trellick tuned the Chronoscope to the farmhouse where the Chronoscope had been built, and watched the image of Dr. Otis as he had worked at its assembly. He could read over his shoulder as he hooked up one dial after the other, and in that way learned the purpose of several he had not been using.

THERE were sets for latitude and longitude and height above sea-level, with verniers for delicate adjustment. There were dials for year, month, day and hour, together with correction tables for Julian and other calendars. Not controlled by dials, but automatic, were five nests of cams that shot the invisible scanners back over the serpentine path followed by the Earth and Solar System as they hurtled through space at the rate of tens of millions of miles per year. And there were focusing screws on the eyepieces, and volume control on the phones.

Trellick discovered another item among the papers he had snatched from Dr. Otis' desk. In the scientist's bold handwriting were these words:

"The filament in the main tube is triborium carbide, and so far as I know constitutes the total amount of this substance so far isolated. I estimate its service life at about twelve hundred hours. Economy in the use of the Chronoscope is therefore indicated."

Trellick shot a hasty glance at the meter on the machine. It read six hundred fifty four! The machine was al-

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ready more than half used up! And of that amount, he himself had used up most of it in his vain searching for Captain Kidd and his buried treasure. Henceforth he must work at closer range and with as accurate preliminary data as he could secure.

When Dippy brought him his supper, Trellick gave him a list of the books he wanted bought. He could not bother with the hordes gone down on ships, the time and cost of salvage was too great, even if the position of the sunken hulk was exactly known. What he was after was shallowly buried treasure of gold or gems, preferably in some secluded spot. The books he ordered were the lives and careers of the buccaneers of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Surely all those rich caches had not been uncovered!

It was Lafitte he chose. He started in the year 1818, and sought that famous privateer's marauding craft, the *Jupiter*. He wasted twenty precious hours of the filament's life before he found her, lazing along under full sail on an almost glassy sea. He gasped as he brought her more clearly into focus, for even at that range of a century and a quarter, she came in with startling clarity. It was as if he was perched in her mizzen rigging, looking down upon the quarterdeck of an actual ship.

A swaggering tough strode the poop, a long glass under his arm. Alternately his eyes roved aloft to check the set of the canvas or swept the empty, cloud-studded horizon. A hawk-nosed cutthroat clung to the wheel, while other picturesquely-garbed scoundrels lolled about the decks. All wore dirty sashes that once were gay in color, from which peeped the butts of pistols or the shiny brass hilts of cutlasses.

Trellick clung to the eye-pieces, watching, but the minutes wore on and nothing happened except the occasional flapping of a sail. Impatiently he jumped the setting of the Chronoscope an hour ahead and found himself about three miles astern of the pirate ship. He realized then that he must use still another dial to keep pace with the moving object of his scrutiny.

ALL day he sat there, continually shifting the time ahead, for he was beginning to realize that the piracy business was not always brisk. It might be days before the *Jupiter* fell in with some luckless merchantman. Yet Trellick did not dare waste his precious filament by continual tracking. At the same time he could not risk too long a jump, as he might lose the *Jupiter* altogether.

Twice a day one of Hickleman's men would bring him coffee and sandwiches, and at intervals he would sleep a little, but in the main he kept desperately at his job.

It was ten days (by *Jupiter* time) before he sighted the first victim, a three masted schooner with very dirty sails. There was a good breeze that day and the corsair lost little time in closing with its prey. Trellick's breath came in excited pants as he watched the engagement from the first discharge of the 32-pounders to the time when the burning schooner drifted astern, gutted of her cargo, and her scuppers running blood.

He saw many terrible scenes in the vigils that followed that first capture. Sometimes he, Trellick, in 1941, would be the first to see the sail lift above the horizon. Usually he was informed of it by the hoarse bellows of the buccaneer on watch. Sometimes he tuned in on the very midst of the furious fight.

He witnessed men shot down or hacked to pieces. He saw struggling, weeping women carried exultantly on board, and the ribald pleasantries with which they were greeted. He saw gigantic Negroes, chained in strings of four or six, driven aboard with whips and thrust down into the holds. Those, he knew, would be later sold in the slave markets of New Orleans or Pensacola for somewhere about a dollar a pound. On other days he would witness the cruel, hard discipline of the seafaring men—the floggings, dippings from yard-arm, even a keel-hauling.

To offset those sights, he saw what he was looking for—treasure! Only there were no great hauls except in the single case of a Spanish grandee captured along with his heavily bejewelled wife. Generally the loot was in the form of cargo or slaves. Yet nearly every vessel outward bound from Mexico carried at least one gold bar and ten or twelve

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silver ingots. Trellick shifted his scanners to the cabin below where he saw the treasure chests slowly filling.

Later, when Trellick saw them unload the stuff at Little Campeachy, the pirate's lair on Galveston Island, he learned that that was the place to watch, for the ships only acted as gatherers, as the worker bees do for the hive. To save filament he learned to take jumps in time of months. Always, after such a jump, he would find more gold and jewels, as the silver, slaves and merchandise were shipped farther east and sold, and the money brought back.

AT last came the day when Lafitte was warned that warships were coming to raid him. That was when the most precious part of the hoard was loaded into brassbound chests and sturdy casks and prepared for burial. Trellick finally had the satisfaction of seeing four chests of gold, one small casket of gems, and two casks of silver taken on board the *Jupiter*, and with them went Lafitte himself. *That* voyage Trellick followed closely, never letting the ship out of sight. In a few hours more he would know—know where those millions in gold and rubies and pearls were hidden, never since recovered. For it is well known that Lafitte died poor and none of his suspected wealth has ever come to light.

"How you doin', kid?" Joe Hickleman's gruff voice demanded. The words were friendly, but the tone was not. "It sounded ominously like a threat. "Today's the last day. If you don't come through—"

"Everything's swell!" exclaimed Trellick excitedly. "Look!"

He glanced at his notes and found the day and hour when Lafitte had packed his treasure chests before taking them out to the *Jupiter*. Hastily he cut back the machine to show that happening. He called the Boss to the eyepiece.

"Cripes!" muttered Hickleman, as he sized up the stacked ingots and the pile of bracelets, rings and unmounted jewels. "Them sparklers is worth a cool million, even to a fence."

"I told you so," cried Trellick, triumphantly. "It was all just a matter of time—"

"Yeah," agreed the Boss, "and you just got in under the wire. If you hadn't located the stuff, I was going to sell you out. A thousand bucks the police are offering for you, but *that* ain't nothin'. A jerkwater college called Bairdsley Hall is offering a hundred grand for this machine in working condition. Say they bought out Otis before you croaked him, and it's worth that much to 'em to get it back, along with his notes. Whadda you think of that?"

IT was hard for Trellick to think anything, for the cold shudders were chasing each other up and down his spine. After all, he had not actually found the place of burial of the treasure yet, and there was scarcely more than a hundred hours left in the life of the filament. If in the end he failed, he knew his gangster captor would not hesitate to betray him for whatever he could get.

"D-don't worry, Boss," Trellick managed. "In another hour I'll have the dope. Of course, after that, I'll have to go and dig the stuff up—"

"*I'll* take care of that angle," said Joe Hickleman grimly. "I'm sitting in on this show from now on."

The rest of the afternoon the two men alternated at the eyepieces. What they saw could have come out of any melodrama about the freebooters of the sea.

Lafitte himself, accompanied by two husky slaves, carried the chests ashore. Four picked desperadoes rowed the boat, but waited at the shore while the pirate and his black porters disappeared into the sand dunes of Mustang Island. The two watchers of the twentieth century trailed them to a lone liveoak that stood on a knoll, and saw Lafitte step off twenty paces to the southwest. Next, the slaves dug a deep hole and eased the heavy boxes into it, and returning to their spades, started refilling the hole. At that point the pistols of the pirate spoke, and the two unlucky wretches tumbled into the excavation on top of the treasure trove.

Silently Lafitte finished the burial, and afterward chopped a peculiar blaze on the offside of the lone oak. Then, his work finished, he stalked back

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through the dunes to where his boat awaited him. Of all living men, only Lafitte knew the exact spot where the chests lay.

"Let's go!" shouted Joe Hickleman. "What are we waiting for?"

HICKLEMAN took two of his henchmen and Trellick with him on the trip to Texas. They hired a summer shack near Port Aransas and told people they were vacationers from the North, come down for a shot at tarpon fishing.

"There just ain't no oak tree!" exclaimed the Boss in deep disgust after they had combed the dunes for four days. "And the place don't look the same. Sure you know where you are? Because I ain't going to stand for any funny business much longer—"

But just then Trellick gave a little yelp. His foot had caught on a gnarled root protruding from the shifting sands. As he turned to clamber up, he saw the grain of the grey, weathered wood. It was unmistakably oak. At once he began to dig, feverishly, with both hands.

By dark they had uncovered the huge, fallen bole. Faint but still legible, despite the fact the bark was long since gone, they found traces of Lafitte's ax marks on the lower trunk. It was the witness tree!

Dawn found all four—even the puffing Boss—hard at work with pick and shovel. By the time the sun was halfway to the zenith they had turned up a skull, long, narrow and with a prognathous jaw. It could have belonged to no other than a native African. Just above the left eye socket there was a hole—the mark of Lafitte's silencing bullet.

Dippy's pick struck wood. A moment later he had fished out of the damp sand a pair of barrel staves. At his cry, the others came up closer and for another half hour they dug frenziedly, but their only reward was more staves and the rotting planks of a broken chest. A pair of brass hinges, green with age, was all the metal they found.

"You-all lookin' for pirate treasure?" drawled a voice behind. There was amusement in the tone. "'Cause if you are, I can save you work. This place's been dug clear down to water more times than I can think of. Back when I was a kid, they was some silver bars found here, but that was years ago. Since then, they've dug up acres and acres but they never found no more."

Hickleman mopped his brow and stared at the tall, gaunt man. He wore a broad-brimmed hat, and on his loose-hanging vest a silver star reposed. The pearl-handled forty-fives that hung from his belt confirmed the man's position. He was the local deputy sheriff.

"Nope," said Hickleman, kicking the skull into full view. "Just saw this lying here and thought we'd find the rest of it."

The law officer viewed it indifferently.

"Yeah," he said, "those turn up every so often." With that he chuckled and walked away.

The Boss glowered at the unhappy Trellick.

"Better think up a better one before we get back to the city," he said, tossing away his shovel scornfully.

"There isn't but one thing to do," said Trellick, doggedly. "Go back to the machine and find out who took it, and when. Maybe it's buried somewhere else."

Trellick tried to make his words sound confident, though at the bottom of his heart he felt a gnawing fear. The filament of the master tube was almost burned out. If the Boss knew that, he might give up the search and at once claim the college's reward. Trellick's reason also told him that if the treasure had been uncovered long ago, it was probably dispersed by now, and its original finders dead. Yet, since the Chronoscope was so near the end of its usefulness, he dared not ransack history for another batch of buried pirate loot. He could only go along the trail he had broken.

"Okay," said the Boss, "but make it snappy."

BACK in his city hideout, Trellick swiftly skipped down through the century. Lightly he touched for a moment in each year. The giant oak still stood in 1860, and '70, and '80, and there was no sign that the ground about it had been disturbed, although under the

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influence of wind and rain it frequently changed its surface configurations.

But a day came in the early nineties when Trellick tuned in on a scene that was different. The magnificent tree lay on its side, uprooted, and two dozen paces away there were hummocks of sand that looked more man-made than natural.

Trellick hastily cut backward, groping here and there in the months just preceding, narrowing the time until he came to the exact day of the tree's destruction. It was on a day in September, and when the machine brought the picture into sharp focus he could see that it was raining in torrents and that heavy black clouds were scurrying past, driven by a fearful Gulf hurricane.

In a moment he could make out four stumbling forms, men that were slogging through the wet sands, hunting shelter. They were rough-looking men and wore patched clothing, and none looked as if he had ever shaved. Trellick took them for tramps who had gone South to escape the northern winter. As he looked on, the men sighted the tree and ran toward it. When they reached it, they huddled in the lee of its massive bole, shivering.

Trellick skipped ahead an hour, then another. Still the men huddled as the wind rose, howling ever higher. Salt spray from mountainous waves was whipping in now, mingled with the driving rain. Then came thunderous lightning, and night. Impatiently Trellick cut ahead to dawn, the break of a day full of wild fury. The great tree was down! And under it, hopelessly crushed, was one of the tramps, while the other three clung like drowned rats to its fallen branches. Off to the left, the corner of a brassbound chest stuck out of the glistening sand. It was an act of nature, not man's cleverness that had revealed the hiding place of Lafitte's treasure;

Impatiently Trellick jumped ahead another day, and found it calm. The three men were digging furiously. Already they had uncovered half the treasure. Then he saw them hesitate, break open a cask of silver ingots, take one of them out and rebury the rest. And with that one bar of silver in their hands, they went away!

Three days later they were back, with a string of packmules. That time they took out all the gold and jewels and stowed them on the sturdy animals' backs. The silver they discarded as being too heavy and of little value to men so rich as they. Trellick's heart sank as he looked at the meter on the Chronoscope. There were not many hours left. Suppose these men split later and went three ways? He could hardly hope to follow more than one. Which one?

The question soon answered itself.

THE youngest of the trio, a well built fellow with a luxuriant red beard, sank a butcher knife into the back of one of his mates while the latter was tightening the last of the donkeys' girths. Then, before the third one knew what was happening, he sprang at him. The two men tussled for several seconds, but the red-bearded one had the advantage of surprise. In a moment he was all alone, standing among the burros on the blood-soaked sand.

Trellick looked on in something akin to horror. Somehow he had the feeling he knew that man. There was something familiar about the eyes—and voice. Yet he could not place him.

However, brutal and cowardly as the murders were, it simplified Trellick's problem. He not only had but one man to follow, but he had the means of making him disgorge when he caught up with him in the present day. For Trellick had learned a trick or two from his association with the Boss and Dippy. He told them his plan, and they provided him the cameras and plates.

"That's right," grinned the Boss, happily, "they ain't no statute of limitation on moider. He'll have to come across when he sees these."

Trellick said nothing, but he was vaguely disturbed. What *was* there about this man he was photographing that seemed so familiar? He adjusted the Chronoscope once more, increased the light to maximum, and flicked the camera shutters again, so they could take still pictures of the cold-blooded murders. Well, at least they had the goods on him, whoever he was.

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Small wonder the discovery of the Lafitte hoard had never been reported!

Trellick soon found a short-cut in following the small cavalcade across the prairies of Texas. Each morning he noted its direction and, knowing that it could not make more than twenty miles during the day, five minutes scouting the next morning would find it, or the embers of the camp fire left behind. Steadily the trend was to the northwest—toward the Panhandle and ultimately Colorado.

The mesquite bordering the trail turned to sage-brush, and steadily the elevation rose. In time, Trellick found himself following the laboring donkeys up a rugged canyon of the Rockies. Then, at last, his query settled down and made a permanent camp. First of all, to Trellick's unbounded satisfaction, the man—he watched buried the bulk of his treasure.

"Ah," breathed Trellick, "maybe all we'll have to do is dig there."

But his hopes were soon blasted. The man he pursued had kept out a pair of the gold bars and was reducing them to powder with a horse-shoer's rasp. Later, accompanied by a single donkey, he hit the trail to the nearest settlement. Trellick saw him hitch his donkeys to a post and saunter into the nearest saloon. He heard the tale of finding a placer deposit and of washing gold, and saw the powder exchanged for credit at the store, for whiskey, and for gold coin.

LATER expeditions followed, and with somewhat mingled feelings Trellick followed his trips to Denver and to the mint, where the man boldly sold gold bars by the dozen—a burro-load each trip. The money obtained from those sales went into Denver banks. As the self-styled miner grew in affluence and reputation for wealth, he became bolder. One day he came to town with two large diamonds which he said he had bought earlier for a lady friend, afterward changing his mind. How much would the jeweler give for them?

Trellick saw all these things and wondered. At that rate, the buried pirate loot in the canyon of the Rockies would soon be turned into bank balances and would cease to exist in the form that Lafitte left it. Yet, when he thought of that, he thought contentedly of the damning photographs of the cowardly murders on Mustang Island. Yes, let the fellow do the dirty work of converting the pirate's cash into modern credit. The Boss could pry it loose in one interview. Already the balances totalled more than two million!

Joe Hickleman's voice broke in harshly.

"Hey, you! What about all that dough? The G-men are snooping around and want plenty for an income tax rap. I can't fool around no longer. What's the dope?"

"Coming along fine," assured Trellick, disconcerted at the urgency in the chief mobster's voice. I'm up to 1904 and the guy has cashed in half the treasure — it's two million in the bank, and more to come."

"Well, step on it, kid. I'm in a corner. Hop ahead and get the answer, and be damn quick about it."

"I'll do my best," said Trellick, humbly.

A SMALL gong rang somewhere within the machine. Trellick was startled. He shut off the power and began examining all the dials and meters on the face of it. All were normal but the time meter. That stood just a hair off zero. The machine was about to burn out, and he was still thirty-five years behind his goal. Who was this man who had lifted the Lafitte millions and where did he live today?

He snapped the current back on and picked up his quarry in the famous old Brown Palace Hotel of Denver, just going into the barber shop. He snapped the switch off with a gesture of annoyance, then snapped it on again, a half-hour ahead. The man whose career he was so interested in, and whose fortune was so closely bound up in his, was just getting out of the barber chair.

His beard had been shorn away and instead he was wearing a handle-bar mustache, curled neatly at the ends as the vogue of that day prescribed. With a yawn, the plutocrat put his collar on, and leisurely tied his flowing cravat.

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Then he tore open a package he had brought with him and took from it an elegant Prince Albert coat of finest broadcloth. An obsequious porter brought in another box and produced a splendid specimen of the old-fashioned beaver hat.

"Very fine gentleman, sah!" said the porter, giving the final, useless whisk of his long brush. "I'll bet the ladies think you're *sompin'!*"

Trellick gazed long and tremblingly at the figure on the visiscreen. He could hardly believe his eyes at first, but slowly conviction got the better of his doubts. *He had seen that picture before*—the top-hatted, swaggering young buck with his curled mustache and imposing frock coat. It was a picture that had always stood on the mantel in his mother's house! It was a picture of his father—taken long before he was born!

Those millions! He had already had them! He had already squandered them! They were no more! All these weary weeks of search he had been following a circular trail. He was back to the beginning. Dead end? It was worse than a dead end. It was the old roundy-cum-roundy!

The hammering on the door was more insistent. Trellick stood speechless, not knowing what to say. The Chronoscope sat before him, dark and silent. That last vision had finished the overworked master tube.

"In the name of the Law!" bawled an overbearing voice. Then the door was burst in.

"You're Trellick? This the machine? We had a tip we'd find you here."

Somebody clicked a bracelet around his wrist. In a daze he was led from the room. Somehow he felt that everything had gone wrong. Of all the pirates under the sun, why had he picked Lafitte?

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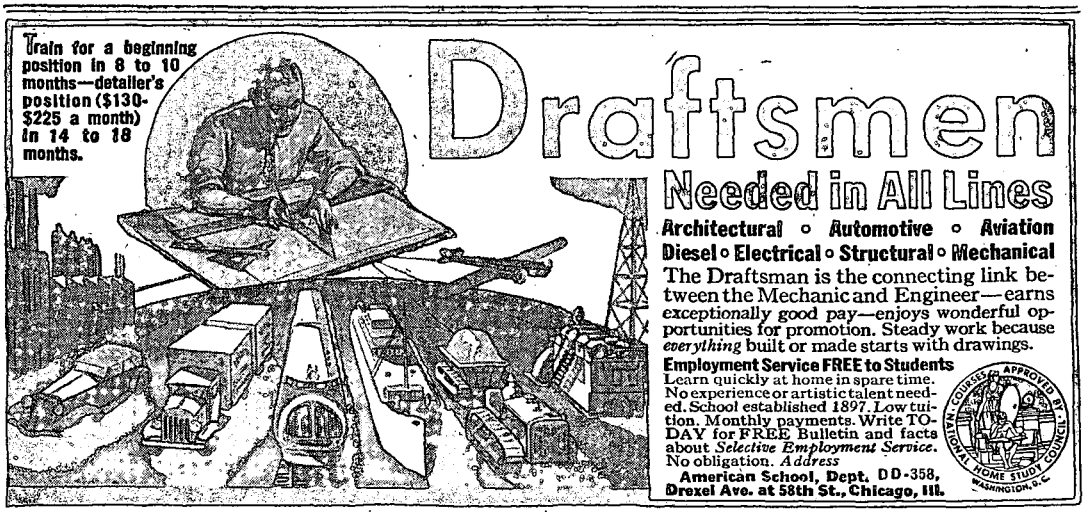
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THE world is *not* round! *Terra firma* is neither a spheroid nor an ellipsoid but something in between—a geoid. Even today, despite three centuries of painstaking fieldwork and thoughtful scientific speculation, man has yet to determine the *exact* size and shape of the Earth.

Everybody knows the Earth is approximately spherical and slightly less than eight thousand miles in diameter, and that it exercises a gravitational pull at its surface which will cause an acceleration of about thirty-two feet per second.

But the geophysicists of tomorrow have a big job awaiting them when they attempt to learn the precise shape of our globe. For the surface of our world is not homogeneous. Its planes abound in bulges and flattened spots, and gravity varies unaccountably. And since the Earth is irregular in all respects, it must be measured in high, low and middle latitudes; in the east and west, and in both southern and western hemispheres.

Getting the vital statistics on Earth is a Herculean task. The scientists of the future had better investigate this planet more fully before training their telescopes on distant worlds!

CALLING ALL SPACE CARS

HERE'S a free tip to the rocket manufacturers of tomorrow!

In the centuries to come, when space-travel becomes as prosaic a reality as motoring along U.S. Highway 40, the sky-lanes will be dotted with crafts of all varieties. Luxury-liners, space-freighters, space-taxis, rocket-racers, etc., will blast their way through the ether, heading for the ports of nine planets.

Naturally, a new terminology will arise. A sort of spatial lingo. For one thing, the rocket manufacturers will have to give their various crafts names, just as the planes and autos of today are christened differently.

The U.S. Navy has solved this problem very ingeniously. Battleships are named after states. Cruisers are named after cities. Destroyers are named after famous men. And submarines are named after fish.

So, rocketeers of the future, why not name space-freighters after comets . . . rocket-racers after satellites . . . space-taxis after elements . . . war-rockets after planets?

And, of course, the System's President's private space-yacht should be named after T.W.S.

AUTOMATIC FAIR AND WARMER

ROBOTS are taking over the weatherman's job!

Automatic weather observing stations, untouched by human hands for months at a time, may soon be scattered around on high mountain peaks or at inaccessible sea locations, so that Uncle Sam's weathermen can have complete and automatic radio reports on the changing weather, necessary for predictions.

An automatic radio weather reporter, developed by National Bureau of Standards engineers, has undergone a successful test at Naval Air Station at Anacostia.

Radio messages that it sends out at predetermined intervals tell the barometric pressure, air temperature, relative humidity, wind direction and velocity, rainfall, and other meteorological factors.

"Everybody talks about the weather," said Mark Twain, "but nobody does anything about it."

At last "nobodies" *are* doing something about it!

PETE PANICS POSTERITY!

PETE (Year-Leaper) Manx's merry anachronistic adventures take place in the past—but his recent exploit, THE COMEDY OF ERAS, reported in THRILLING WONDER STORIES, is being preserved for the future.

Yes, ladies and gentlemen, fame has come to the playboy century-spanner!

The noted writer, Phil Stong, author of the popular novel, "State Fair," is preparing an anthology of fantasy fiction to be called "The Other World." And we have just learned that Kelvin Kent's hilarious story of Shakespearean times, THE COMEDY OF ERAS, published in this magazine, has been selected for inclusion in this anthology.

(Continued on page 126)

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A Complete Novelet

OUT OF THE

The sight that greeted Jones' eyes inside the *Lorna* was grim.

Paul Jones Thrills to the Roar of the Rocket as He Hurls His Ship Through Space on a Flight of Destiny!

CHAPTER I

Derelict in Space

CAPTAIN PAUL JONES stood at the port bridge of Spaceship OB-343, plying freight between Earth and Mars, and irritably pushed back the visor of his blue cap. He was frowning angrily. For the past half hour he had been trying to pilot his ship back into the radio directional channels, but without any success.

Now he picked up a transmitter.

"Flight engineer!" he barked.

Behind and under him he could hear the steady thrum of power as the space ship beat its way forward. He could visualize the control crew at their stations, lined up before intricate levers, fingers slapping the hundred and one different knobs, jiggers and assorted dials of the illuminated dashboard.

"Delinger speaking," came the harsh voice of the flight engineer in his ear.

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YEARS

By IVAN SANDROF

Author of "King of the Cosmos," "Moment in the Sea," etc.

"We're still off our course, Delinger," said Jones worriedly. "What do you make of it?"

"Either the beam's wrong—or we are!" said the other promptly. "Why don't you send out distress rockets?"

Jones stemmed the angry flow of words that formed in his throat and stifled his temper. Delinger was getting more and more difficult. He was Minton's protege, put on the OB-343 after Jones had several run-ins with the beefy super of Space, Incorporated because of his failure to kick back part of his salary.

That most of the pilots accepted Minton's demands and came across didn't make things easier. There was a stubborn streak in Jones.

"Look; Delinger," he said patiently. "The beam's out. Take your bearings from the nearest planet and fly compass until we get back into range. Step up port jet, two thousand. Ditto with starboard."

"Okay," Delinger grunted.

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The OB-343, dawdling in space with just enough speed to keep the vitals going, picked up its skirts and fled through the limitless void. Under the molybdenum hull Jones could feel the renewed surge of power, the additional thrust forward, as the superchargers went into high.

GLANCING out into space his face froze suddenly. Then his muscles contracted.

"Wow!" he exclaimed, as he wrenched wildly at the pilot wheel. The space ship lurched sickeningly to starboard, then righted itself as he flung it back on its course. Emergency bells began clanging at all stations. He cut them off with a flick of a switch. "Back to posts!" he ordered. "No damage!"

"What's up, Jones?" came Delinger's voice from the secondary bridge. "I didn't see any wandering meteors."

"You wouldn't," Jones muttered to himself. "Nothing," he said aloud. "Thought I sighted something."

He peered out again and turned the ship back in a wide arc. What the devil was it? He could have sworn that the lights from the space ship picked up some object in the void. And at the rate they were going—He pushed the ugly thought out of his mind. Two comets meeting head-on would have about the same chance.

Reaching over he snapped on the main light beam. There it was! Caught in the light like a struggling moth it flickered, then held steady as the OB-343 came driving forward on a steady keel.

In a few seconds he was close enough to identify it as a ship of some kind. Suddenly he knew. A derelict! He searched his memory in an effort to identify it. There had been no space ships reported lost that he could remember. And this was no ordinary ship, either.

It was a relic, a museum piece, born of some rash pioneer's dream. On the dulled, dark-green stern was the name *Lorna*.

"What's it all about?" Delinger asked from behind him. He had come in unobserved, a sharp-featured, husky fellow chewing a letel nut.

Jones observed the coarse black beard, the untidy spread of collar and shirt, the way his cap was twisted to one side.

"Delinger," he said softly, "you're a good flight engineer, but I'll be the pilot of a Martian gondola if you aren't the sloppiest officer I ever worked with." Then: "Prepare a boarding party of three," he ordered. "Come along if you like. I'm going to look into this derelict."

"Minton won't like it," Delinger protested, his eyes narrowing. "You're overdue already, Jones."

"To hell with Minton!" snapped Jones. "Order that landing detail!"

Delinger turned on his heels and left the bridge. A strange one, that Delinger, thought Jones. The sort you have to watch all the time. Still Minton seemed to think highly of him—

Dismissing both of them from his thoughts Paul Jones climbed into a space suit, adjusted the portable oxygen tank at his side after zippering himself into the space-tight helmet. Finally Delinger, Allen and Cummings, similarly clad, came forward for further orders.

"Let's go," Jones said briefly.

It took only a few seconds to scramble out of the double forward port exit, then leap across the narrow space, where a slim catwalk afforded foot room about the derelict's length. Cautiously hanging on to the metal handrungs they edged forward. After glancing around to make sure that his men were prepared to meet trouble if it should come, Jones pushed in at the door. It swung in easily. Too easily, he thought. This door has been opened in space!

THE scene that greeted him when he flashed his raylight about the interior might have been a silent tableau on a stage. There were three in the cast. All were clothed in antiquated space suits of some animal fibre, probably wool. One figure lay prostrate, his limbs stiff in death. Near his head knelt a brown-bearded figure holding a tube of oxygen. He, too, was dead.

But stirring as that scene was it

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was the third figure which captured his attention. She was seated in a corner of the cabin before a writing table. She was dead, but even death had failed to change her in its ghastly embrace. Perfectly preserved, she was slim, but beautifully formed, with a pale, oval face, long dark lashes and a flowing crown of golden hair that sparkled and glistened like gold sequins.

Reaching across the table Jones gently removed the sheet of paper under her fingers, read:

> Lorna, my darling daughter:
> It looks as if our mutual namesake isn't doing so well. Something has happened to the generators. It is the sixth day now and our oxygen is nearly gone. Very weak.
> Shouldn't have come, perhaps, but someday, you, too, will know the love that recognizes no peril. Elkman just stepped out. Your father is just as brave. Now he's giving his oxygen to Wilson. He just this minute looked up and threw me a kiss for you. . . .

Jones shrugged, jammed the letter into his pocket. There was a bracelet on her wrist, a small chastened gold affair. He slipped it off, then turned to investigate the other side of the cabin, where the generator heads were stored.

As he turned back he saw Delinger standing before the dead woman, his head cocked on one side.

"Some looker, eh, boys?" he leered.

"Cut it out!" Jones snapped.

Delinger grinned sardonically.

"Yes, she's a honey, all right," he said to the others. Jones saw red then, and went for the flight engineer, fists swinging. Delinger saw him coming, dodged the vicious blow, swung a right himself. Then they tangled together, swayed and went crashing down to the floor, still fighting.

Allen and Cummings managed to pull them apart. Dark-eyed and glowering they stood up.

"Back to the ship," Jones ordered, wiping a cut on his chin, where a heavy ring on Tom Delinger's finger had cut. He glanced at the flight engineer's mocking, defiant face. "I ought to throw you in the jug for this, Delinger, but I'm going to keep you on as officer until we get back. But remember this—if I ever sign articles with you on the same ship again, so help me Jupiter, you'll never come back!"

Delinger scowled.

"That's mutual, Jones!" he snapped back sourly. "You keep out of my way and I'll keep out of yours!"

CHAPTER II

Catastrophe!

IT was impossible to bring the derelict back to Earth, much as Jones wanted to. Her generators were all shot and too antiquated to use the reserve fuel that the OB-343 carried. Still he couldn't leave her floating in space as a menace. Interplanetary space laws forbade it. There was only one thing to do.

Backing his space ship away in a burst of speed he glanced through the range finger of the disintegrator and yanked the switch.

A streak of red spat from the nose of the OB-343. It bathed the green derelict in a pinkish glow that rapidly turned to deep rose, then red, until the *Lorna* glowed a translucent mass of molten metal. Then it crumpled suddenly, and the small pieces floated away into space like embers from a distant fire.

The remainder of the trip back to the New York spaceport was uneventful. During that time Jones did not see Tom Delinger. He spoke to him only over the transmitter when orders were necessary.

Swinging high over the gleaming spires of New York, the intricate network of super-highways criss-crossing through the structures, Jones issued Delinger his landing orders.

"Everything set?" he asked.

"All set!" Delinger snapped.

"Fifteen hundred," Jones ordered.

"Fifteen hundred," said Delinger.

The OB-343 slowed down to a fraction of its speed, quivered under the sudden pull of gravity, then dipped down heavily toward the landing field.

"Port jet, one thousand," Jones ordered.

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"One thousand," Delinger repeated. "Starboard, one thousand."

"One thousand," came the echo promptly enough. "Leveling off."

"All right," Jones said finally. "Ease her in." As he turned away from the observation port, the ship suddenly lurched wildly. Leaping to the emergency controls Jones yelled: "Blast off!" He yanked savagely at the equalizer. "Blast off, damn it!"

Again the frantic peal of emergency bells, the sound of feet pounding down the center catwalk. But it was too late! The ground reared up at the ship at a crazy angle. There was a blur of buildings, of blue sky and green earth. Then a violent, ripping crash as the giant craft plunged down and collapsed, her control fins sticking out at an angle like the flukes of a sounding whale.

Badly shaken, Jones staggered out, a cut over his eye where he had smashed into the lip of a tube. He licked his dry lips and laughed harshly.

"Five million dollars worth of ship gone to blazes!" his mind kept repeating.

There was the shriek of a crash siren, and half a dozen ambulances and trucks charged down, expelling weird figures clad in metal suits. They carried gas extinguishers and smother bombs. Like flame wizards they hurled gas grenades deep within the oval jet well, now smoking furiously.

Paul Jones heard the voice of First Mate Allen above the din.

"All present and accounted for, Captain," he said. "No casualties."

"Thank God for that," Jones said tiredly. He shrugged his shoulders and lit a cigarette. "Now to face the music," he thought, as he walked slowly toward the administration offices.

HENRY MINTON was waiting for him behind his desk. He was a stout executive, with a florid complexion and a thick neck. A small black moustache gave him a sporting air, but his eyes were small, pig-like and cold.

"Jones reporting, sir," the captain of the ill-fated OB-343 said.

Minton held a report in his beefy hands, glanced narrowly at the slim, blue-eyed figure in front of his desk.

"Well, *Captain*," he sneered. "Eighteen hours overdue and you have to crack up on us, eh? A fine show! What do you think we're running here, a kite flying contest? By Jupiter, I'll bust you wide open for this! You've all but ruined a five million dollar ship!"

Jones tried to protest, but his words were drowned in Minton's rising anger.

"A grease monkey could have done a better job!" he raged on. "No excuses, Jones! I saw that miserable landing from the control tower. You're through. Get out!"

Jones glared at him.

"You can't get away with this, Minton!" he shot back. "I know you've been looking for an excuse to fire me because I refused to fork over a part of my salary—"

Minton slammed his fist heavily on the desk.

"Get out!" he shouted.

"Okay!" Jones snapped. "You win—for the present." Then he went out.

Outside he paused to light a cigarette with trembling fingers. His mind still seethed from the suddenness of Minton's attack. He had expected a bawling out, yes, but to be flung out on his ear after five years of service? It was incredible.

He thought over his landing orders then. In landing it was necessary for both main jets to blast with the same frequency, for the auxiliary jets wouldn't have been strong enough to deflect the heavy ship. Suppose, though, instead of syncronization, instead of both jets blasting evenly, one had been raised. The result was easy to figure out. The ship would be thrown off balance; a crash was inevitable.

Part of the engine crew was still gathered about the ship talking the accident over. The fires had died down now. There was only a faint plume of smoke hovering over the jets. Singling out Middlebury, who was in charge of port jet Number One, Jones called him over.

"What was your last order from

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Delinger?" he asked quietly.

"One thousand, sir," Middlebury said promptly.

"Did you reach it?"

"On the nose, sir." Middlebury hesitated, perplexed. "I don't understand it, Captain. Maybe I'm talking out of turn, but main starboard was tuned to two thousand when we crashed!"

Jones started visibly. He was right after all! His voice was icy cold when he spoke again.

"Where is Tom Delinger?"

"He left immediately after the crash," Middlebury said. "Good luck, Captain. We—I—all the boys. We want to say—"

Paul Jones nodded.

"News gets around fast, doesn't it?" He grinned at the other, then turned to leave. Jabbing his hands into his pockets as he walked, Jones felt something cold and metallic. He pulled out a small gold bracelet.

Recollection of the *Lorna* swept over him then. And with it, the whole tantalizing mystery. Who was the girl? Who was her husband? What were they doing in space? And what had happened?

ON his way downtown Jones stepped into a municipal Autofeed. He dropped a few coins into a slot, pushed two buttons. A slab of apple pie accompanied by a mug of coffee appeared in the distance on a moving platform. It slid along, clicked by a selector, then turned sharply and deposited the order directly before him.

"Thank you!" a pleasant metallic voice said. "Come again!"

After he had finished eating he walked to the Municipal Library. A silent elevator whisked him to the twentieth floor. Here everything was quiet, hushed. Light green rundrum surfacing on the floors, an improvement over rubber and carpets, padded his footsteps. When a door swung open Jones glimpsed a room full of research workers seated before automatic micro-film projectors.

A pleasant-faced attendant approached him. He nodded when Jones told what he wanted.

"About one thousand nine hundred eighty, wouldn't it be?" the attendant said. "We can let you have Room six hundred sixty L. The material will be waiting for you."

Paul Jones entered a private auditorium, took a comfortable padded seat that automatically tilted to afford the greatest ease. Soon the light dimmed, the curtain slid open and a three-dimensional color film appeared on the beaded screen.

The voice of the invisible lecturer was cultured and soothing.

"Experimental work in space flight had been conducted for many years before the first successful flight to Mars was achieved in one thousand nine hundred eighty-nine. Utilizing the early efforts of Goddard and other pioneers, Spilkitz harnessed the efficiency of the plane to a rocket design. It resulted in the first crude space ship along the lines of those now in use."

The laboratory scene was replaced by that of an airport in one thousand nine hundred ninety-one. It was crowded with spectators who gathered around a small space ship. There was an air of intense excitement about their movements, as if a great undertaking was about to begin.

Jones leaned forward tensely as the crowd moved back, revealing a space ship.

"This," the lecturer continued softly, "is the pioneer flight of the space ship *Lorna*. We are fortunate in having the only record of its kind complete with sound track as recorded at the take-off."

A new voice broke in from the screen, a voice from the 20th Century. It was harsh, nasal, unpleasant.

"Flash!" the man shouted wildly. "History is being made with this flight! Little old New York has gone ga-ga over this first, epoch-making, colossal, wonderful, non-stop flight to Mars!" A loud cheer broke out at his words. "The crowd is giving Professor Lane and his wife a big hand! Elkman and Assistant-pilot Wilson have just stepped in—"

The camera swept into a close-up, and Jones recognized the brown-bearded face, then drew a deep breath

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as the blond beauty of Lorna Lane flashed before him. She smiled, waved to the crowd, then bent forward to kiss a baby held up by a nurse.

SOMETHING in the way she bent forward and touched the baby's head made Jones swallow hard. She knew that she's never to come back he thought.

"They're off!" the announcer screamed suddenly.

With a burst of lumbering speed and blinding smoke that obscured the cheering crowds, the *Lorna* spat power into the wind and roared off into the blue sky.

Then the picture on the screen faded out.

"Space holds her secret now," the voice of the lecturer broke in. "Undoubtedly the *Lorna* perished, as did so many others in the infinite void of space, the limits of which no man has fully penetrated and doubtless never will. We take you now to the unveiling—"

Paul Jones rose and made his way out of the room to an annex, where newspaper clippings on micro-film were waiting. He quickly slid the roll through the projector. The baby had grown up, married, had children of her own. One of them was still living, a retired professor of the College of Physicists, noted for his research in space dynamics.

Jones had a sudden inspiration. He would visit the professor. Quickly he found out where he lived, then engaged a sky cab. . . .

CHAPTER III

Kidnapped for a Purpose

JONES paid off the sky cab pilot, marched up to the modest white cottage which was surrounded by a pleasant growth of well-manicured lawn. He jabbed at the door chime, wondering if he should have come. Idly glancing down the street he noticed a man regarding the house from a distance. Abruptly then, the door opened.

Looking in Jones was confronted by an elderly man, about his own height, with snowy hair. A pair of piercing gray eyes regarded him speculatively. He carried a sheaf of blueprints in one hand.

"Yes, yes? What is it, young man?" he said. "I don't recognize you as a student. If you're selling any of those new-fangled Suggesto can-openers, I bought three yesterday."

Jones couldn't help smiling.

"Nothing like that, sir," he said. "My name is Paul Jones. I take it you're Professor Winston?"

"I am."

"May I come in for a moment? It's about something I came across in space—something that concerns the *Lorna* expedition."

Professor Winston's brow corrugated.

"Did you say the *Lorna?*" And when Paul nodded, he shook his head in amazement. "Come in, young man, come in!"

Seated on a comfortable divan in the living room Paul Jones began his incredible story. He had scarcely begun when Professor Winston got up, considerably agitated.

"My, my!" he exclaimed. "Extraordinary. Wait, Mr. Jones. I want my daughter to hear this. Most unusual," he muttered, as he walked to the foot of the staircase and called: "Lorna!"

"Yes, father?" a pleasant, musical voice answered.

"Please come down at once," the professor said.

Lorna Winston, slim, beautiful, with a short mop of golden hair windblown about her head, appeared on the stairs. Jones rose to his feet and gaped.

"Why—why—" he stammered. "She looks exactly like—"

"There *is* a strong resemblance to her great-grandmother, isn't there?" the professor asked, beaming.

Lorna sat on the divan. She tucked her shapely, nylon-clad legs under her and smiled. As Jones told his story she fastened her large, gray, intelligent eyes on his face and kept them there.

"I had no choice but to disintegrate the ship," Jones finished.

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Professor Winston nodded.

"You did the only thing possible, Mr. Jones. We're both grateful to you for coming here." As Jones rose to leave, the professor waved an impatient hand. "Nonsense, my boy. You're staying for coffee. I've got a bit of work to finish, but Lorna will see to it that you're comfortable."

"If I'm not intruding—" Jones began.

"Do stay, Mr. Jones," Lorna invited, flashing him a friendly smile. He sank back, glad of the opportunity of spending another few minutes in her company. The professor went into an adjoining room, where he could be heard writing with the Thinkograph.

Jones watched Lorna's slim hand drop a coffee capsule into a cup of boiled water, took it from her.

"What are you doing now, Mr. Jones?" she asked finally.

A cloud swept over his face. He had completely forgotten his own troubles. She guessed that something was wrong and said sympathetically:

"Please tell me about it. I might be able to help."

HE told her the story from beginning to end.

"Minton is out to get me," he added bitterly. "There isn't a space outfit that would touch me after that crack-up. I know of other pilots who had the misfortune of getting on the blacklist. Harry Stengel took his own life. Juke Brenner is wanted by authorities on four planets. And Paul Jones," he added harshly, "is on the skids!"

There was a pause as Lorna screwed up her pretty face in thought.

"Minton—Minton," she muttered. "Is he a heavy fellow with a florid face and a tiny moustache? A pompous way of speaking as if he expected the world to be handed to him on a platter?"

"That's Henry Minton," he said dryly. "But how did you know?"

Lorna laughed merrily.

"He was here only yesterday, blustering all over the place trying to get father to give him his design for a new space ship. He wants it for that interplanetary solo race next month. I suppose you know all about it?"

He nodded and smiled.

"Heard about it. The winning company gets the Federated contract for space mail. They're all after it. Did Minton get the ship?"

"I should say not!" she said scornfully. "You should have seen him, though. He swore, demanded and threatened to get it if he had to move heaven and earth."

"Look out for trouble," Jones warned. "He's dangerous."

Lorna laughed.

"Father can handle him," she said confidently. "But this isn't helping you, is it?" She was thoughtful for a moment. Then she brightened. "Have you ever heard of calodar?"

"Sure," he said promptly. "One of the new big five metals. But I didn't know it was out of the labs yet. They say its adoption for space travel will cut down time to a fraction."

Lorna was smiling mysteriously now.

"You don't mean to say your father —" Jones exclaimed.

Lorna nodded proudly.

"He discovered it six months ago and put every cent he has into a new plane to prove it. The first test flight is tomorrow, but we haven't found a pilot yet. You see, it's still a secret. Dimensions and such, I mean. We haven't found anyone we can trust. But perhaps I'd better have father tell you. Dad!" she called.

Professor Winston appeared in the doorway.

"I couldn't help overhearing part of your conversation," he chuckled. "Do you really need a job, my boy?"

Jones nodded.

"Good," said the professor warmly. "I need a pilot, and you're it!"

They shook hands firmly.

"I don't think you'll regret it, Professor Winston," said Jones huskily.

"I'm sure he won't!" Lorna seconded warmly. She pressed Jones' hand in a firm good night. "We can depend on you, then?" she asked. "We'll meet you at the Terra Spaceport at nine. See you later."

PAUL JONES stepped from the house, jammed his hands into his pockets and whistled. He even felt

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light-headed. It was about time he got a break, he thought, and a glow of affection toward Professor Winston and his daughter spread through him.

His fingers again encountered the gold bracelet. He had forgotten to give it to Lorna Winston. But he wouldn't forget the next time they met—tomorrow.

Deep in the thoughts of the future he altogether failed to hear or see the small sky cab swoop out of the sky; failed to hear it skidding to a silent landing less than twenty feet behind him. From it a brace of three huskies piled out noiselessly and crept up on him.

Jones whirled just as they sprang.

"Why, you—" he snarled.

A loaded club flashed murderously at his head. He saw it coming just as he connected with the chin of one assailant. He leaped to one side twisting to avoid the impact. Too late! It smashed down on his skull. His brain seemed to split, then soar in a rush of flame. Numbness spread to his feet, gripped them like pincers. The gulf of menacing darkness swept up and slapped a brush of black across his eyes. . . .

It seemed years later when he came to. His hands lifted a few inches, then stopped. He couldn't raise them any higher. Whoever had slapped the cord over his hands and feet had done it thoroughly. Groaning, he fell back. He tried to break his bonds, but his efforts only caused him more pain. He forced himself to lie quiet and think.

Why the assault, he wondered. Why? What had he done? Then he knew. It was Minton! Unable to get Winston's plane for the contract race he must have planned that no one else should. And that man watching the house—of course!

Professor Winston's house had been constantly shadowed, and when he came there he had been recognized. Since Minton could not have known the real reason for the visit he obviously must have leaped to the conclusion that Jones was going to pilot the plane. It all made sense now. Too much sense!

Pressing his ear closer to the floor Jones heard the sound of water lapping against dock piles. And when he painfully raised himself to a sitting position a draft of cold air chilled his cheek.

Rolling over he crashed against the wall in the dark, then patiently pawed around in the dust and refuse. His hunch was right! His fingers closed around a sliver of glass that had fallen in from the broken window. A new feeling of confidence arose in him as he patiently sawed away on the rope. Finally his bonds gave way!

He jumped up rubbing his arms and wrists to renew the circulation. Then he went to the window.

Slowly he eased up the sash. It slid one, two inches, then stuck fast. There was nothing to do now but take the chance. He braced both elbows, sent the window flying up with a shrill shriek of protest.

Behind him there were curses, the thud of footsteps. Then the door was flung open. In the split second before he vaulted through the open window, Jones heard the spatter of a ray gun blast the upper plane, felt the burn of molten glass on his wrist as a few drops spattered down. Then he was plunging toward the water.

He went down as far as he could in the mud of the river, then boldly struck out for shore. In the all consuming fog he found safety.

He could hear the futile curses of his captors. The fog was stained with red lightning patches as they took pot shots at anything remotely resembling a head. Grimly Jones swam on.

CHAPTER IV

Plan for Victory

WHEN Paul Jones approached Hangar 16 at the Terra Spaceport a few hours after he escaped from his captors, the attendant polishing the door there stared at him curiously.

"What are you looking at?" Jones snapped irritably. "Has Professor Winston arrived yet?"

"Are you the guy the professor and

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his daughter waited for yesterday mornin'?" The attendant answered his question with a question.

"Yesterday morning!" Jones almost shouted. "What happened when I didn't show up?"

"They waited a whole hour for you," the man said, "then Professor Winston thought you weren't coming and hired another pilot. If you was the guy they were expectin', where were you?"

"Cracking almonds!" Jones said testily. So that was it! The smash on the head had laid him out a full twenty-four hours. It was longer than he had thought.

The attendant was still talking.

"Miss Winston said for me to tell you if you showed up that when she said nine o'clock, she meant nine o'clock—and you could go chase a golden pheasant to Pluto for all she cared!"

"Thanks, Bud," Jones said dully.

Dour-faced he hailed a sky cab and went out to the Winston house. He rang the chime and waited impatiently. There was a lot to explain to Professor Winston and Lorna.

The door swung open. He saw the attractive figure of Lorna in a shiny house dress, opened his mouth to speak.

"Oh, it's you!" she said, beating him to it.

"I—" he began again. The door slammed in his face.

"Let me in!" he shouted, banging on the door. "I want to explain why I wasn't there! Lorna—Miss Winston! Let me in!"

The door refused to budge.

"I'll sit on your porch till Hell freezes over!" he threatened, and abruptly sat down on the steps and put his chin in his hand, glaring at a black cat mincing across the lawn.

He was still sitting there two hours later. Now his chin rested in his left hand, instead of his right. Then he heard a slight click. He whirled suddenly to glimpse the door banging shut again. There was a cup of steaming coffee and a sandwich in a tray outside the door. On it was a small printed sign:

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

He grinned to himself and wolfed down the sandwich in three gulps. Then Professor Winston came marching up to the house, found him tilting the coffee cup against the sky.

"Outside service?" he asked, a twinkle in his eye.

Jones flushed, then laughed with him.

"What's that bandage on your head?" the professor asked in a stern voice then.

"That," said Jones emphatically, "is why I wasn't at the spaceport yesterday. Some thugs attacked me as I was leaving your house."

"Come inside," said the professor quietly, unlocking the door. "We've a lot to discuss, I'm afraid. . . ."

LORNA changed her whole attitude when Jones' harrowing story was finished.

"I'm sorry I acted like I did," she apologized, "but I was burned up when you failed to show up. This means so much to Dad and me, that I couldn't help it. I was sure you had run out. I know better now." Her voice was high-pitched now. "But those men who attacked you—they might have killed you!"

"They seem to have done their best," said the professor emphatically. "Fortunately Mr. Jones has a good head on his shoulders."

"A thick one, you mean!" Jones grinned. Then he added soberly: "If your Thinkograph is in order, Professor, I'd like a shot at it. I have a hazy recollection of one of the men who conked me."

Professor Winston led him into the next room, adjusted the headset, which resembled the listening end of a stethoscope, at Jones temples. The two control wires joined together in the indicator box, where a series of sensitive dials indicated the flow of electrical vibrations.

As the room was plunged into a faint darkness, Jones frowned at the blank wall, concentrating all his memory and will power on that hazy, split second before he had lapsed into unconsciousness. They had come leaping at him from the rear. What had happened. A scuffle of feet—He had

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half-turned— A glimpse of that snarling face—

"Hold it!" whispered the professor. "It's registering." He turned a dial, stepping up the indicator. He waited five seconds, then reached in and extracted a wet print from the hypo and stop bath. "Not very clear," he said, disappointed. "But wait a minute! That's very odd! Lorna!"

"Yes, Father?" she answered, entering the room.

"Isn't this the pilot we hired yesterday after Paul failed to show up?"

Lorna glanced at the print.

"The same one!" she cried. "Phil Gary was his name, he said."

Jones reached for the picture, nodded bitterly.

"His name isn't Gary—it's Delinger! He's taken off his beard, but I'd know that ugly face in a million. He's Minton's man."

Professor Winston's face had lost its kindly expression.

"That settles it!" he said crisply. "I've made up my mind!"

They looked at him expectantly.

"I wasn't going to say anything about this because I wasn't sure," Winston began, "but I am now. I didn't like Minton's actions from the beginning. But now that he has resorted to such dishonest practices I'm entering my ship in that flight competition. Paul, I'm engaging you as pilot! You haven't seen my ship yet, but she'll do." He chuckled. "She'll do nicely!"

"That's a splendid idea!" Lorna cried.

"You can count on me to see you through," Jones said eagerly.

"There's only one thing that's worrying me." The professor frowned. "The matter of a base on Venus. We have to refuel, you know. The ship can carry only so many reserve shells—"

"Let me go, Father!" Lorna interrupted.

The professor shook his head.

"But I can do it, Father!" she insisted. "I've my space license. There really isn't anything to do except transport a load of fuel shells and wait for the ship to land. And besides," she finished triumphantly, "there isn't anybody else you can trust. You said so yourself!"

"I don't think your mother would have approved," the professor said.

"Lorna Lane would have!" she flashed back.

FINALLY the professor gave in to her wishes.

Paul Jones was thoughtful. He knew Minton, knew what he was capable of doing.

"If I may say so, Professor," he said, "our participation in that flight should be kept secret until the very last minute." He looked at the girl. "Lorna can leave for Venus as a regular passenger under an assumed name. We can ship the fuel reserve and whatever else we need by another freighter consigned to her."

Professor Winston nodded, went out for a minute. He brought a globe from his study, a sheaf of topographical maps and charts, several dozen books. Then the three of them went to work. . . .

A few weeks later a comely passenger, conservatively dressed for space travel in gray and brown, took off on the OD-177 for Venus. She held a ticket made out to Mary Wallace, but the young man at the spaceport who saw her off whispered to her:

"Take good care of yourself, Lorna!"

"I will," she said. "And you'll look after father, won't you? He's so careless and gullible—"

"Don't worry about it," he reassured her. "I'll look out for him."

He helped her into the space ship, then stood watching as the doors were hermetically sealed. In a moment the starter whipped his flag down. With a roar of thundering jets the liner quivered, then soared off. Jones got a quick glimpse of Lorna waving a white handkerchief at a porthole, then the ship became a blue bullet in the darker sky and disappeared.

Slowly he went back to the hangar, where the tail of the new rocket ship barely cleared the doors. Its calodar hull, surfaced with yellow plastic, threw off the waning afternoon light with an even sheen, revealing the

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pure, flowing lines. The test flight had promised wonders, but would she stand the terrific gaff of a trip to Venus, he wondered.

A sudden movement inside the hangar startled him.

"Is that you, Professor?" he called.

There was no answer. Abruptly a dark figure hurtled out, crashed into Jones and sent him flying on his back. Then his assailant fled. Cursing at having left his ray gun in the ship, Jones picked himself up and sprinted in pursuit.

Suddenly conscious of the heavy wrench in his hand, he paused, took careful aim and hurled it with a savage twist. It struck the fugitive squarely between the shoulder blades. The man stumbled, flung out his arms and plunged on his face.

Jones was on him in a second. Twisting him around he yanked him erect.

"What are you doing here?" he demanded.

The assailant clamped his lips together and glared balefully out of dark green eyes.

"Won't talk, eh?" muttered Jones. "Well, we'll see about that!"

He dragged the man back to the hangar, bound him and hurled him in a corner. As he started back through the gloom to see if any damage had been done to the spaceship, he stumbled across a body lying on the floor. A shiver of horror went through him as he flashed a torch down.

"Professor Winston!" he shouted.

Quickly he bent over the huddled body. There was a burn in the clothing near the heart—a round, livid welt the size of a half-dollar.

"Ray gun," Winston muttered brokenly. "I'm done for. . . ."

Through a blur of anger and grief Jones observed that the professor's lips were moving feebly. He bent his head still closer, barely made out the faint words.

"Win the race. . . ."

Then there was a tired, long-drawn sigh. The distinguished white head rolled over and was still. Professor Winston's work was finished. . . .

All the next few days were filled with strain, intense work, worry and exhaustion. Paul Jones couldn't remember when he had been so tired. He was tempted to chuck the race altogether, leave at once for Venus and see to Lorna's safety.

One thought plagued him constantley. If Minton had seen to Winston's demise, he must have known about Lorna's trip to Venus. But he couldn't ignore the Professor's last request. And with the race less than five days off there were a thousand things to attend to.

The beryl automatic jet synchronizers had to be adjusted for higher atmospherics; the retard tubes weren't even in place. Reserve fuel rockets had to be stored; the Visograph had to be tested. The list seemed endless. He cut his sleep to a minimum, ate on the run and refused to leave the hangar for more than a minute at a time.

Now, as he was fixing the fuel shells, a face poked through the hangar door and looked at him.

"What do *you* want?" Jones barked.

It was Middlebury. He stood quietly looking at Jones' haggard face, then peeled off his coat.

"Give me a wrench," he said. "These closed jobs are tough. You have to get inside."

SMILING, Jones tossed over the tool. The little man knew his stuff, he thought, watching knowing hands twirling in the fuel shells. It was good to have someone to work with.

"Did that guy you caught crack yet?" Middlebury asked suddenly.

Jones shook his head.

"The Interrogation Squad is working on him. He's a tough customer."

Abruptly a youthful messenger boy came running in through the door.

"Spacegram for Mr. Jones," he announced. "Sign here, please!"

The spacegram was from Lorna. It said:

EVERYTHING SET HERE. TELL DAD I AM OK. SEE YOU SOON. GOOD LUCK. TUNE IN XIX1ZZ4.

She didn't know yet about her father. Jones was grateful for that, at least. He sighed wearily and went back to his work. . . .

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THE competition flight had attracted the best ships and pilots in the country and something like two million spectators. They crammed the mile-long ramp extending the full length of the spaceport.

From the various hangars rainbow-colored ships were pushed out on trailers. Government officials in crisp white uniforms drew lots in the center of the field for the starting positions. The ships were to leave in pairs.

"Numbers Five and Six!" boomed the voice over the amplifying system. "Mars limited, Ship OV-Seven-Seventeen. Gelo Mals, pilot. *Earth Express,* Ship OV-Six-Sixty-six. Hal Young, pilot. Positions, please." The air quivered with sound as the ships took off.

Middlebury helped Jones into his space suit, flattened down the transparent cowl.

"Don't burn out your ship," he advised. "I know you're anxious to get there, but you've enough speed to take it easy and then some."

Jones nodded, slipped on his thermostatically heated gloves.

"Numbers Seven and Eight," boomed the announcer. *"Pularis Limited,* Ship OV-Eight-Forty-six. Lee Helin, pilot. *International Flight* Ship, OV-Eight-Eighteen. Duke Polgar, pilot."

Suddenly Middlebury grabbed Jones' arm.

"Over there!" he gulped, pointing. "That ship coming out of Hangar Twenty. I must be nuts! It's an exact duplicate of yours!"

Paul Jones followed the direction of his arm. A beet-red ship was being rolled from its cradle. Line for line it was a duplicate of Professor Winston's!

"I was afraid of that," Jones said grimly. "Delinger flew this ship. He had plenty of time to take a complete set of secret X-ray photographs."

"Dirty crooks!" Middlebury was growling. "I'm going to talk to the Committee. They can't get away with that stuff!"

Jones pulled him back forcibly.

"Too late," he said. "This will have to be settled in space."

Middlebury nodded, his eyes glowering with angry light.

"Numbers Nine and Ten," the announcer went on. *"Space, Incorporated,* Ship OV-Three-Forty-four. Tom Delinger, pilot. Experimental, temporary license, OV-XXX, entry of the late Professor Sidney Winston. Paul Jones, pilot."

"Our cue," Jones said briefly. "Let's go!"

The red ship was already hoisted on its incline, nose pointing toward the sky. Jones stepped out for final instructions from the officials while his ship was run up a second incline.

Delinger, looking truculent in his maroon space suit, swaggered over to Jones.

"Still trying, eh?" he smirked.

Jones said nothing in reply. He couldn't afford to lose his temper now. There was too much at stake. But later, after the race was over—

They received their final instructions from the officials, went back to their respective ships. Delinger, supremely confident of the outcome; Jones, grimly purposeful and eager.

Jones climbed into his craft, let the ship warm up a bit before the takeoff. He leaned out to wave to Middlebury.

"Good luck, Captain!" Middlebury shouted. "Contact me on the Visograph to give your position in flight!"

JONES grinned, waved good-by, then slammed the observer's porthole shut.

The starter unfurled his checkered flag. Jones could feel the power in his ship champing to shoot out into space. The flag whipped up, then down. Then, like two cannon shells, the red and yellow ships catapulted from the steep incline in a perfect takeoff and stabbed mightily into the sky.

Impatient to see Lorna's face, Jones flicked on the Visograph and dialed XIX1ZZ4. He was much too far from his objective to be able to penetrate the space curtain, but he thought he would try.

All he got was a flow of purple sparks across the frame as static bolts peppered and scrambled the rays. He snapped the Visograph off, turned to his instruments.

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Delinger, in the rival red ship, was nowhere in sight. Jones pushed him out of his mind and flicked on the automatic pilot. The gleaming radium dial of his speed indicator read 2800 per. Not bad, he thought, and settled back for a smoke.

He estimated that he was about half way to Venus before he tried the Visograph again. Dialing rapidly, he was rewarded by a strong, steady humming.

"Got it!" he exulted. He tuned in on the split-hair control, fed it a bit more juice and unscrambled the beam. An image appeared in the frame, blurred, then cleared suddenly.

"Lorna!" he exclaimed. "I never was so glad to see anyone in all my life! How are you, Lorna?"

Her voice came back strong and clear.

"Fine," she said. "And you, Paul? I've been waiting to hear from you."

She looks a trifle peaked, he thought, then nodded and smiled.

"The ship's fine," he assured her. "Going like blazes! I should be in Venus in about eighty decycles. Say, you must be lonely up there. How's the fog?"

Was he crazy, or were there tears in her eyes?

"I'm not lonely," she said significantly, a peculiar expression stealing over her face. "You say you'll be here in eighty decycles?"

"Yes," he said, puzzled. "Sure—" An almost imperceptible shake of her head made him pause. "Sure," he repeated lamely, "eighty decycles, or so. I can't tell exactly." Then he caught on with a rush and said meaningly: "You hold the fort, Lorna—I'll be there!"

"Yes, do *come as fast as you can*," she said. "Land at the field near the red beacon. You don't have to *be* so *careful there! I'll be waiting for you.*"

His nerves strained to the breaking point, Jones went over her words. She had emphasized some of them. What was she trying to say? Suddenly he knew.

"Come as fast as you can. Be careful. They're waiting for you!"

He tried to get her again, but the receiving end was dead. One thing hammered through his brain. Lorna was in danger!

CHAPTER V

Treachery's End

BREATHING a summons to the gods of speed, he tuned the accelerator full on. As if the yellow ship was in complete accord, the growing hum of generators changed pitch. There was a sudden leap forward—an almost unbearable, mounting whine that made him swallow with pain.

Louder and louder it screeched, until it seemed as if his eardrums would shatter. He glimpsed the speed indicator, couldn't believe what he read there. The ship had surpassed every speed Professor Winston thought it capable of doing. . . .

Unrolling a chart, Jones quickly looked over the scene that lay below him. The spotted globe of Venus, twin sister to Earth, was rapidly approaching as he penetrated the heavy layer of white cloud that surrounded it. He cut his speed, shifted back to manual control and prepared for a landing.

The mint-green promontory looming out of the brilliant planet he identified easily as the great range of Pularis. Circling, he took his bearings from the peak, headed due east according to a compass previously adjusted to Venetian magnetism.

He circled slowly and came down for a perfect landing in a rough depression several thousand yards from the depot. Zipping his space suit tight, he tucked two ray guns into his belt and crept out.

The harsh light of Venus was hard to get used to after the controlled illumination of his ship, but he let his eyes tear until they got used to it.

He saw no one yet. But as he crawled over a rise on the cold rock, keeping to the black shadows, a man's figure loomed against the sky. He was intently watching the field, one hand resting on a powerful firegun in his holster.

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"So far, so good!" Jones thought grimly.

Rising from a crouch, he raised his gun and slugged the lookout across the head. The man groaned faintly and fell. Quickly Jones bound and gagged him, then pushed the body into a shallow depression.

When Jones peered in through the window of the depot he saw Lorna. She was bound to a chair. As she turned her head suddenly she saw him. Jones put a warning finger to his mouth as sudden, wild relief appeared in her eyes.

The two men who were guarding her were seated at a table gambling. One of them looked up, saw her staring outside. He lunged violently for the gun resting at his elbow, whirled toward the window. There was a spatter of sound—a sudden blinding flash. The man slumped to his knees, dead.

The other figure threw up his hands in terror when Jones came barging into the room.

"Mercy!" he implored. "Mercy, master!"

Jones cut free in an instant. She touched his arm affectionately.

"I knew you'd get my message!" she cried happily. "Oh, Paul, I just knew you would!"

"You can thank the ship," he said. "It's a honey, Lorna! Fastest thing I ever set eyes on. Fastest thing man ever built." He paused, confused, suddenly aware that he hadn't told her about Professor Winston. "There's something you—"

SHE faced him fearlessly, eyes sad. "My father is dead?"

"They got him just as you took off," he said slowly. "I should have let you know sooner, but I didn't want you to face it here alone. I'm sure it's Minton and Delinger again—but they won't get away with it. They've committed enough crimes to banish them both from the civilized planets for life!"

She was sobbing quietly. Hesitantly he touched her sleeve.

"Don't worry too much, Lorna," he said. "It's hard, I know. But I'll take care of you, if you'll only let me—"

She nodded and smiled, brushing away her tears.

Jones motioned to the trembling figure of the kidnapper.

"You—come on!" he snapped. "There's work to do!"

It was a matter of minutes to transport the fuel shells that Lorna had been looking after to the ship. Their prisoner, now a willing prisoner, did most of the work. Jones turned to him and glared.

"You don't deserve it, but I'll give you one chance," he said. "If I take you back to Earth will you talk?"

"Talk?" chattered the other. "I'll talk!"

"What about the extra weight?" Lorna demanded.

"The ship will stand it," Jones said confidently. "All set?"

"All set!" she replied.

"Let's go!" he said crisply. . . .

When they got out in space again and on their way back to Earth, Jones gave Lorna the controls while he went back to check a port generator.

"Paul!" he heard her cry out suddenly, and came rushing back, expecting trouble. "Look! There's a red ship!"

"Delinger!" he growled. "Shove over. I'm taking command now."

He stared into the reflector, increased the magnifying image and clearly made out the red rocket streaking through the blue-black void. The hot gases of its power jets tipped one end in a golden glow.

"Impossible!" Lorna exclaimed. "It's an exact model of ours! Paul, how is it possible?"

"Delinger took X-ray photographs while he was flying your ship," he said. "The time I didn't show up—remember? There are a lot of things I have to talk over with Mr. Delinger."

As the red ship slewed on its tail and came abreast of them, Jones realized that Delinger, whatever else he was, could pilot.

"He's no slouch," he muttered. "It's going to be closer than I thought."

"I don't like this," Lorna said worriedly. "What's he hanging back for?"

Their scared prisoner, securely bound in the back, began to jabber

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wildly. His eyes bulged as he glimpsed the red ship.

"Him!" he shouted. "In red ship. He tell me to kill!"

"Did you hear that?" Lorna exclaimed.

"I heard," Jones said meaningly. Out of the corner of an eye he saw the red ship fall still farther back, then soar for more height in a sudden spurt. Then it dropped like an aerial torpedo. As it flashed by twin disintegrator rays spat out of its nose, converged and splashed a full stroke on the yellow ship.

The cold metal sizzled; the plastic outer skin fried and sloughed off in the wind like melted rosin. But the frame held.

"Good old calodar!" Jones said with relief. He stole a quick glance at Lorna. Her face was white and pale; her hands clenched in her lap. But she met his glance fearlessly.

He grinned at her, then jerked savagely at the speed controls. Behind him his prisoner whimpered with fear.

The red ship fell back again, attempting to repeat its former tactic, but Jones, alert to the trick, soared up at the same instant. Now, it was a battle of wits and daring. The two pilots were constantly maneuvering, looking for a chance to get in a death blow.

Lances of fire sprayed out, cut a blazing arc in the darkness, hissed when they struck metal, flashed out into space when they missed. Again Jones struck, missed, fought for position again. Then, as he let loose once more with his disintegrator gun, the red ship faltered, turned tail and began to retreat with all jets blasting.

"Watch!" Jones snarled, one hand gripping the handle of his disintegrator. "Tom Delinger didn't have time to copy the calodar of this ship and he knows it! Now I've got him where I want him!"

Slowly the yellow ship crept up on the other's tail. Frantically, as if aware of what was coming, the red one turned and twisted, went streaking down, then up. But it could not shake off its pursuer, nor avoid the bright eager ray that suddenly crisped out.

Sparkling and glowing, it fondled

(Concluded on page 128)

To People who want to write *but can't get started*

you have that constant urge to write but e fear that a beginner hasn't a chance? Then en to what Fulton Oursler, editor of Liberty, to say on the subject:

"[illegible] is more room for newcomers in the writing [illegible] today—and especially in Liberty Magazine—than ever before. Some of the greatest of writing men and women have passed from the scene in recent years. Who will take their places? Who will be the new Robert W. Chambers, Edgar Wallace, Rudyard Kipling, Jack London and many others whose work we have published? It is also true that more people are trying to write than ever before, but talent is still rare and the writer still must learn his craft, as few of the newcomers nowadays seem willing to do. Fame, riches and the happiness of achievement await the new men and women of power."

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GREETINGS, space rangers! Yes, your old Sergeant Saturn is still around, even though a lot of your ray-gun blasts just about melted the cooling units on the Sunside of the ship, what with all this talk about us decelerating instead of accelerating.

Moons of six planets, fellows, we're riding a brand-new orbit. There are meteor-swarms, Saragassos of space, and ether-vortexes ahead, so give the Sergeant a chance to shake his space-crate out of a warp and level on an even keel before you cut loose. Come along with us for the interplanetary ride until it's smooth sailing from Mercury to Pluto.

Sure, you may get space-sick at first. But this spatial navigation business is no sky-larking job, and we told you so. The tough part is blasting off from port. Well, that chore is done now, what with two issues behind us, and it's safe to say that we can afford to coast the ship, lock the automatic controls for a few chronons of time, and dip our mitt into the mail compartment.

First, here's a hearty hello from Space Buckaroo Jerry Mace. We'll be with you in a momentum, lad!

PARDON HIS VELOCITY

By Jerry Mace

Well, plug up my jets and call me bloated. That weird noise (Jan. '41 issue) has a disconcertingly familiar ring. What can it be? Why, it's none other than Sergeant Saturn. No broken-down, Xeno-drinking space pirate from Mercury to Pluto could ever sling poisonous invective like Sergeant Saturn when he has a helpless reader at the point of his typewriter. Unless it could be—ah, yes, there is a crack-brain at large who compares favorably with the dear Sarge. Though I understand he's at present chasing a Comet Harpie. He is a broken strut known, in poliler circles as "Nosedive" Ginsburg. A brother of yours, no doubt. Nosedive clutters up a few blank pages in a certain air-war mag.

Now that you are thoroughly subdued, Sarge old-Mars Apple, I will leave you to your dreams of a two-headed Venusian mermaid. Thence to strap on my rocket belt, adjust my five-dimensional goggles, clap on a crash helmet and with a flirt of my tongue in your direction I'm off for a flying survey of the January, '41 atrocity which hides under the name of T.W.S. And speaking of atrocities, we have first—

The cover: I don't know what sort of brew is quaffed by Artist Mayorga to bring forth the B.E.M.s. But I'd like to have a little for my cold.

Interior art: Excess baggage.

The stories, in order named: 1—"The Greeks Had a War for It." Again Kelvin Kent saves the day. It is head and shoulders above the rest of this issue. A brace of Mercurian orchids to Kent.

2—"Remember Tomorrow." Kuttner paints a beautiful picture of Utopia only to smear it up with a present-day savage who doesn't know when he is well off. I sentence Mr. Kuttner to thirty days of breaking up meteorites in the asteroid belt.

The rest of the stories were fair, with the exception of "Citadel of Science" and "Secret of the Comet." These I consign to the slag heaps of Io.

The special features are always interesting as well as educational.

Well, I really must blast off now, Sarge, as I feel a touch of Venusian swamp fever creeping up on me. And there is a cute little nurse out on Pluto . . . 1040 W. 110 St., Los Angeles, California.

Bravo, thanks, and a six space-gun salute to you, Jerry! It gets pretty lonely here in the control room of the space-crate sometimes, and you can bet a string of green space-stones that it's like finding an oasis in the great Martian Desert to meet a rocket-rookie that talks our language. Confidentially, you sound like an old space-dog, yourself. Sure you aren't masquerading as a kiwi?

So sling the lingo again, son. It's palaver like yours that keeps an old-timer like me from going space-batty. And here's an ethergram from a regular passenger on this line. Pilot Hidley ought to have a few light-years of solo solar voyaging under his belt by this time. He's been with us ever since we can remember.

REPORT CARD

By Charles Hidley

What happened to you this month?—it really looks like T.W.S. has dragged itself out of the mire—at least for one issue, anyway. An example of real stf that we "old-timers" have been clamoring—even above the editorial protests—is Kuttner's "Remember Tomorrow." I will not say that the conclusion and climax were rather obvious from the beginning—they were—because the plot has been used before; instead, I will com-

In this department we shall publish your opinions every month. After all, this is YOUR magazine, and it is edited for YOU. If a story in THRILLING WONDER STORIES fails to click with you, it is up to you to let us know about it. We welcome your letters whether they are complimentary or critical—or contain good old-fashioned brickbats! Write regularly! As many of your letters as possible will be printed herein. We cannot undertake to enter into private correspondence.

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mend a fine author on his efforts to pen a readable yarn with nice, simple characters and no superman. Wesso's pics not spectacular as story.

I really would have preferred to make "Citadel of Science" the leader, but after such a powerful narrative, the namby-pamby ending was a great letdown. This is the second time that Burks has written something really good—his "Survival" turned my stomach completely, and if a story sickens and gags me or gives me goose-flesh, then it is a good story. Wesso was only fair here, with the best grouped buildings he has done in ages; this also applies to Kuttner's novel. "Secret of the Comet" appealed to me very much—the reason escapes me—and although others may rate the shorts before this one, I go to third with it. "The Robot Beasts," "The Crystal Invaders" and "The Mad Molecule" were 4, 5 and 6, with the cover short decorated by the best illustration in the book and a good Mayorga wrapper to boot.

I won't say that Gabriel is a better artist than Bergey because the latter has not as yet displayed any st-fal art tendencies to date. The human reactions and pathos of the fourth, the suspense and clever solution in the fifth, and the technical science of the sixth made the shorts true winners.

Engelhardt's "History Class" and the latest Pete Manx tomfoolery were 7 and 8. It's good to see Saaty back again, and his new style is much better, too; thanks for giving him a spot in your mags. This was undoubtedly a Wesso issue, and therefore a poor one; why, oh why, does he not draw in the style of 1930? Perhaps if his work was full-paged and framed it would noticeably improve. (See his **grand** pics for STARTLING'S "Yank at Valhalla.") The October Bergey "Life Machines" cover was ninth out of eleven on my poll. This month does better than that.

I notice that "Sarg" Saturn is now general peace-maker for all three mags. This chatty, informal two-way column is better than the blank letters, but cut down a bit on the gab and beware of childish eccentricities and goo-goo talk. SOME of your readers are out of the infant stage, you know.—New York, N.Y.

Thanks for the expert X-ray analysis of the January issue, Pilot Hidley. We're glad you keep your vision-scanner tuned in on us month after month, come static or sunspots. Glad you found reception on the Kuttner novel perfect.

The old Sarg isn't as gabby as you make him out, although some say he was vaccinated with a victrola-needle when he was a brat. Guess he was a bit space slap-happy when he called you mugs kids. (SOME of you *are!*) Anyway, the grizzled space-dog is sorry if he's stepped on any sensitive toes (you guys should be wearing your lead-weighted shoes just in case) and by way of atonement invites you to drop in for lunch. So show up at our space-port some day for chow, Pilot Hidley, and Sergeant Saturn will buy you the best meal of concentrated food-capsules you can find around 10 East 40th St.

And now let's dig down into the old mail sack for another spacegram.

OUR ORBIT'S OKAY

By Martin Alger

Say, what has come over you? All this jargon about blasting your jets and so forth—and such a jovial mood, too! Your comments in the Jan. READER SPEAKS sound as though you had just had a jolt of Jin-Jin Juice from Jupiter!! Or maybe two jolts. Anyway, I am glad to see the long notes on the letters.

General remarks on the January issue:

Cover: Oh, boy! The BEMs are transparent this time. One malproportioned dame indulging in improbable contortions. One grim-jawed hero with blazing automatic.

[*Turn page*]

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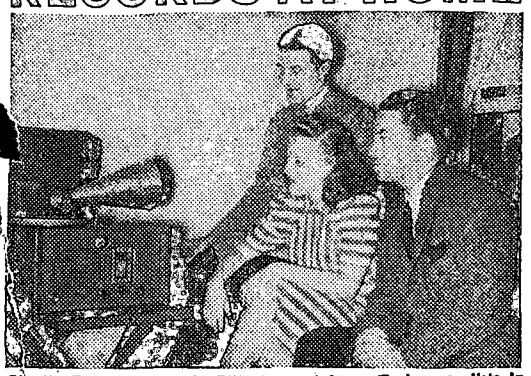

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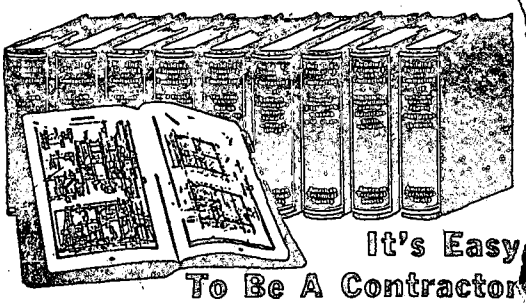

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Well, you have had 'em worse.

Stories: "Remember Tomorrow" and "Secret of the Comet" tie for first place. While the former had a very ancient plot it was well done and the psychological angle brightened it up. Gallun's yarn, while in some respects similar to his "Comet's Captive," was quite good. In the last few months Gallun has given indications of a swing back to his high level of several years ago. I am practically drooling at the prospect of another "Old Faithful."

"The Greeks Had a War for It" is up to the level of the other Manx stories. "Citadel of Science" seems rather far-fetched, no explanation of how they made all that equipment without any special facilities. "The Robot Beasts" has an old-time slant. The others are just a good mediocre average.

The line-up for the next issue looks ok. The departments are up to the average and so are the inside illustrations. Marchioni seems to have improved; his pic for "The Crystal Invaders" is not spoiled by his usual "doodads" and exaggerated equipment draped all over the walls and hanging from the ceiling.

By the way, Sergeant Saturn, do you have a ring? Wow! I'll bet Ackerman grated a few molars when he hit that one.—Box 520, Mackinaw City, Mich.

No, Rocketeer Alger, it wasn't Jin-Jin Juice from Jupiter, nor even gin-gin firewater from a bathtub. Just a jigger of Venusian Radium Fizz that we downed at the football game in the Martian Canal Bowl. Seriously, this letter department has needed a dual pow-wow control system for a long time, and hitherto ye editor has been as mum as a larynx-less *skitar* on Mercury. At any rate, we're here to stay with cyclotrons exploding, jets blasting, and space-flivver rattling until you space-rovers shanghai us into a padded cell in the fourth dimension.

Yep, there's a ring around the Sergeant—but it ain't a halo!

And here's Pilot Paul Carter, with his All-American scientifiction selection of the year's top yarns:

1940'S TOP TALES

By Paul Carter

Another year has passed, and with it twelve superb issues of T.W.S. I don't know whether or not you have any way of analyzing letters to find which stories were best of the year, but here is one letter for a starter:

The top yarn is "The Sun Maker." Need I say more? Fighting it all the way is "Secret of Anton York," by Binder. I'm willing to bet those two stories will be accepted as classics by future fans.

Third, "Day of the Conquerors." At least a near-classic; the attitude of Vwil, the Martian, ought to shove it up over the line. Fourth, "Revolt Against Life." Kummer's best yet, bar only "Signboard of Space." Fifth, the five "Via" episodes. Sixth, "Science is Golden," "Knight Must Fall," "Comedy of Eras," "Man About Time." Don't ever let Kent go!

Seventh, "Doom Over Venus." I don't care if Hamilton is a world-saver. Who else could write so many good stories per year and yet turn out the excellent "Captain Future" novels?

Eighth, "Beauty and the Beast." The year's best **single** short story . . . bar only the two series above. Ninth, "Seven Sleepers." Tenth, an unbreakable tangle between "Upward Bound," "The Eternal Light," "Gems of Life," and "The Great God Awto," with "There Was No Paradise" just missing the boat.

Before I get lynched, I want to explain to the fans that any other yarns they rate "tops" are very close to being on the ten-best list.—156 S. University St., Blackfoot, Idaho.

Some hit parade you've lined up, lad! The yarns you picked rate four stars with us, too. Cosmic comets, man, but the very men-

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tion of all those classics makes us want to stop ship in mid-space and reread those gems. But there's a long journey ahead, and there's little time for star-gazing, much as we'd like to. So we'll juice the atomotors with a few shots of energon and hop along to the next ethergram.

It's from Space-vet Carl H. Anderson. He still doesn't sign his letters. Oh well! Oddly enough, he's also prepared a tabulation of 1940's greatest and bestest. With a list of so many first-rate stories to brag about, it's a wonder this space-rat finds something to squawk about. Yet he always does! Cut in your radiophones on his high-tension frequency:

HEAT-WAVE

By Carl H. Anderson

Before I step lightly and quickly into my usual routine, let me make this admission. You have, on the cover of the January issue, taken a step in the right direction. The fact that you have also taken an additional one in the opposite direction all but nullifies this however.

You have given us a jacket without giants. Revolutionary.

You have given us a red background. Revolting.

You have also given us a cover-dauber, Gabriel Mayorga, who can draw people and possibly even aliens if they were built to anything but Joe Millard's silicon-dioxide formula. In other words, if the January jacket had been white or blue or light green instead of red, if the aliens' eyes had not bulged, and if they had not been riding those little hot water bottles, you would have had a good science fiction cover. But with Paul, Wesso and Schomburg around why do you dawdle with a newcomer who suffers from the same lamentable lack of originality and imagination as does Bergey?

The stories are running true to type: one good novelet, one poor novelet, two good shorts, two average shorts, one awful short, and a novel that could have been much better but that still had more than Tracy and Hamilton could drum up in two previous issues.

Good Novelet: Gallun dreamed it up, gave it a fairly good brother act, a bright twist and a touch that R.Z.G. has always had and called it "Secret of the Comet." However, he made one horrible slip, which floored me with surprise, when he said in plain terms that a rocket ship cannot exceed the speed of its exhaust blast. As is commonly known, a rocket's impulse remains the same regardless of the speed at which it moves.

Poor Novelet: A writer of Burks' experience should know by now that a story built on a character's mental conflict with himself needs a parallel plot to carry the action and the surprise twist. "Citadel of Science" lacked this and consequently, though it was well-written as is most of Burks' stuff when he puts his mind on it, the yarn had no distinguishing point. Really good characterization is all that saved this from being a routine pot-boiler.

Good Short 1: Pete the Manx is back in form again and in business, too, I see. Also in business is Pete's jovial sponsor who has learned something, apparently, from his trade-journal dissertations on the finer points of cheese culture. It must be nice to have a fiction character as firmly intrenched in the readers' hearts as Pete is.

Good Short 2: Englehardt's "History Lesson." Logical, accurate, good. Easily the issue's best short. Only R.Z.G.'s novelet beats it.

Average Short 1: The graduate amateur who is plunging wholeheartedly into the science fiction game has a little of something or other here, but I still don't understand exactly what happened. Do you, Mr. Bester? What made the mad molecule mad?

[*Turn page*]

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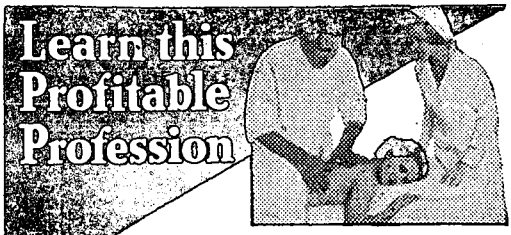

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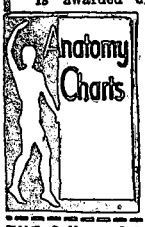

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Average Short 2: Apparently carefully written and including some really commendable pieces of characterization, "The Robot Beasts" had nothing else. The time-raveled plot of a professor and his dastardly young assistant who covets the Universe has been written so many times that the faintest essence of interest has been wrung from it.

Awful Short: Millard's formula-yarn which meticulously avoided the slightest semblance of originality received an almost good illustration at the hands of M. Marchioni. Pumpkin-eyed D T's pain as much on the inside of a mag as on the outside, however. Observe, please, the glims of the Marauder from the Mysterious Abyss on the left. In my kind of geometry they teach that two spheres cannot intersect. A phenomenon peculiar to quadri-dimensional space, no doubt.

The So-called Novel: Brother Kuttner's yarn actually almost defies analysis. I think it needs a good shellacking, for its almost paceless structure if nothing else. "Remember Tomorrow" lacked even the luster that usually comes from Hank's tossing his characters about from one locale to another. The accidental method of reaching the future was new—also the tactics of the aliens.

Here is a tabulation of 1940's best material.

Novels: "The Sun Maker"; "The Day of the Conquerors"; "The Secret of Anton York"; "The Seven Sleepers"; "The Worlds of Tomorrow."

Novelets: "Day of the Titans"; "The Time Cheaters"; "Revolt Against Life"; "There Was No Paradise"; "The Tides of Time"; "Dr. Cyclops"; "Voyage to Nowhere."

Shorts: "Beauty and the Beast"; "Prospectors of Space"; "The Great God Awto"; "Dosage"; The "Via" series; "The Comedy of Eras"; "One-Way Star Ride"; "Science Is Golden"; "Knight Must Fall."

THE READER SPEAKS continues on the upswing though it suffers somewhat for lack of space, due a lot to the broguey palaver of ye olde dogge of spayce, Sergeante Saturne. Since he seems to be such a well of information, maybe he can tell us all what Brother Lowndes finds so intriguing about double negatives. He's the kind of a guy who would start removing an appendix from the inside. —Traverse City, Michigan.

Well, the old space-crate dipped and dived a few times from the effect of your cover-to-cover lambasting. But you survived the issue—and we survived the heat-wave. So the Kuttner novel held no magnetic attraction for you? Well, we thought it one of the lad's best in a long time. And if you want to argue it out, we'll meet you behind the little red house on Jones' Asteroid at dawn. And it'll be ray-pistols at twenty paces, suh!

Well, space is valuable, even if there is so much of it around out here in the void. So let's hurry on to the next letter in the mail-heap.

FANTASY FLAW

By Cadet Private F. H. Rathbone

I have one complaint to make about the December issue of your magazine, and that is the uniforms on the cover. These show a gross ignorance of U. S. Army uniforms. First, the officers' hat emblems are wrong. Second, the privates shown have no hat emblems. This is incorrect. They should have them. Also, the privates should have pistol belts, not non-commissioned officers' belts.

The officers shown have only a round disc on their coat collars. They should have a U. S. on the upper part and crossed pistols on the lower part. The privates should have a disc on their collars, whereas nothing is shown.

I liked "Gift from the Stars," by Edmond Hamilton, best.—Riverside Military Academy. Gainesville, Georgia.

Imps of Saturn, but if Bergey's military

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mistake isn't a fantasy flaw of the first magnitude! What you say about the privates' belts reminds this old space-dog of a scientifiction story published many moons ago, wherein the hero wore three belts—one to hold his ray-guns, another to hold his cartridges, and the third to hold up his pants!

Some day we hope to publish an issue that even the most microscopic once-over would find free of errata. But then we wouldn't be publishing letters like yours. And notes from our tribe of flaw-finders are what add spice and what-have-you to the fuel that makes this department tick. It's fun to be fueled—so take us to task whenever you peelots spy a boner.

Speaking of cover complaints, here's another salvo from Rocketeer Wynne Clack. Someone had better send our Art Editor a gyroscope for his birthday and stabilize his equilibrium!

COVER COMPLAINTS

By Wynne Clack

Being the first letter I am going to write to you does not mean I am just going to say *hello and good-by*. No sir, I have a few revolutionary changes I would like to make. I would like to see the magazine change to the larger issue you had started in 1931 or thereabouts.

Now to make a few comments on the January issue. Cover, okay, except for the mistakes between it and the sketch for the story. In the sketch the man and woman are wearing future-designed clothes. On the cover they are wearing modern clothes. The earphones in the sketch are also of future make while on the cover they are quite modern. The man's gun in the sketch looks like a Luger while on the cover looks very much like a Colt Automatic. On the cover of the magazine the glass-encased person broke up and fell apart. In the sketch he went up in smoke. The girl on the cover is facing the crystal invaders and the second one from their right is hit. But the girl in the sketch is facing away from them and the third one from the right is hit. Finally, if you will compare the mugs of the crystal invaders on the cover with the mugs of the ones in the sketch I think you will notice quite a difference. The weapons of the glass are different, too. Well, that just about settles the cover.

Now for the inside. I'm glad to see Sergeant Saturn has taken over THE READER SPEAKS. It looks like the old boy is going to take off with an overload every time from now on. The stories were pretty good this time. "Citadel of Science" had a good ending to something that might have been bad. "The Mad Molecule" was short but pretty good. "The Greeks Had a War for It" is another Pete Manx wow. "The Secret of the Comet" is not what I expected, but pretty good anyhow. "The Robot Beasts" excellent. Kline left an opening for a whole bunch of stories about the Doc. "Remember Tomorrow" lived up to expectations. "History Class, 2133 A. D." —I liked the ending very much. By the way, we're waiting to find out about the Martian Pyramids in the "Via" stories.

Manly Wade Wellman is my favorite author. I wonder if he remembers his story "The Disc-Men of Jupiter," back in September, 1931 Wonder Stories. My next best author is Edmond Hamilton. A couple of others are Raymond Z. Gallun and Otis Adelbert Kline.

Please ask John Taine to write a full-length novel. Ever since I read "The Seeds of Life" I've been a Taine follower. Am enclosing twenty-five cents for you know what. —209 West Downie Street, Alma, Michigan.

Well-taken points, lad! The artists' jets seem to have misfired, or something. Well,

[*Turn page*]

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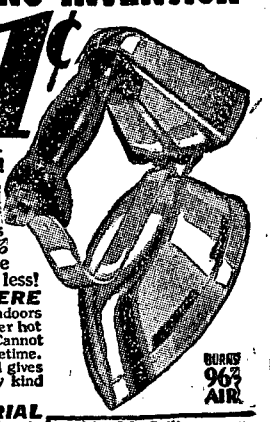

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Your old skipper has been keeping contact with author John Taine since last perihelion, and a swell fantasy novel is in the cards. And a flash from Gordon A. Giles via etherline announces that the secret of the pyramids will positively be revealed in his next trilogy. So settle back there in your space-hammock, ranger, and get ready to accelerate with Gillway and the rest of the "Via" crew. It'll be fast rocketin' every single mile of solar speedway.

Who said there was nothing to the science of telepathy? Focus your electroscopes on this next letter from Space-Veteran Bill Anderegg. Ice-fiends of Pluto, but who *isn't* wondering about the Puzzle of the Pyramids?

FAVORS REALISM

By Bill Anderegg

Being a comparatively old subscriber to your magazine, I feel that I am justified in telling you what I think of your stories. In reading your stories for the past five or six years, I've run across on the average of two in each magazine that I just could not stomach at all. In your last publication there was one in particular I did not like, "Exiled from Earth." Here was the typical, bad spot in the magazine.

Give us good down-to-Earth stories, stories of discoveries. I am not against stories of rocket ships, but I am when they get so big you can't swallow them. In stories like the one I speak of, the characters drive a rocket ship as we would a kiddie car.

But the rocket stories Gordon A. Giles writes are full of discoveries and action as well, and when you are finished with the story you can't help but think about it sometimes. By the way, I'm still in a state of mystery about the Pyramids in his latest stories.—219 Lexington Avenue, Los Angeles, California.

Bless your heart, Bill, but you earned your space-pilot papers five years ago. You should have helped us steer the flagship a few light-years back. We've got plenty of room at the controls, and there's always a place for an extra passenger.

So—the problem of the perplexing pyramids has you too counting sheep at night? Or have you and Wynne Clack been *en rapport?* Hold on to your helmet, pal. The answer is as clear as space—and you'll be seeing it soon.

And here's warm words for Mayorga, our newest cover artist:

WHO IS SERGT. SATURN?

By David Glazer

Henry Kuttner takes top honors in the January T.W.S. Kuttner seems to be improving lately. His book-length novel in the November STARTLING bears me out. "Remember Tomorrow" was also very good. Wesso's illustrating added a lot to the enjoyment of the novel.

Of the novelets, Burks out-noses Gallun. Burks has a knack of doing wonders with a simple plot. On the other hand, Gallun had to go back to the old idea of digging a hidden secret out of space. Still, it was a fair story. The fillers are all good. And I could not help but notice that Alfred Bester is really going places fast. Not bad for an amateur. But then again, he is pro now. The Pete Manx yarn was swell—as usual! But don't hand them out too fast.

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Mayorga's first cover for T.W.S. is splendid. Almost as good as Bergey. But not quite as good. And who in Hades is Sergeant Saturn? Sounds like a space-bum. In conclusion, for the umpteenth time, I want a cover by Wesso.—12 Fowler Street, Dorchester, Mass.

So, Pilot Glazer! The old sarge is a space bum, eh? Well, you just see here, young squirt, you're—right. My identity wasn't meant to be a scientifiction puzzle. I just hung my ray gun on the antlered head over the fake mantelpiece one day, stuck my parachute in the umbrella stand, and took over the supervision of the communication departments of this brace of magazines of technical nature. And there you are.

But you have to get curious, do you? Not satisfied with the digging up of prehistoric bones in the Gobi Desert, but you want to paw over the skeletons in Saturn's family closet, eh? Well, chop-chop and all right.

According to the best rumors, your old sarge was born in a space ship plying its way between Earth and Saturn in the early days of spatial navigation. Anyway, Sergeant Saturn was a sort of surprise to Earth, Saturn, his mother, and himself. The least said about the shock to his father, the better. That adventurous gentleman was en route to Saturn with his young wife to explore the jungles for certain flora and fauna of the newly accessible planet. He wound up as a factor of the Saturn Trading Corporation.

But about Sergeant Saturn: He learned to talk before he was ten. Some space-rats malign him with the story that he still doesn't know how to read. One day, while busily making Martian-style mudpies (the kind without crust) at the doorstep of his father's trading post, a fugitive greenie from Kar Kuluku's Interplanetary Circus bounced a Venusian spherical brick off his head. Since then your sarge has been going in dizzy circles—around the Sun—and in the course of time became suitable for the post he now holds of licking you young kiwi pilots into line. Comes the revolution, and the old space-dog will still be with you. He weighs about one and a half gravities, which ought to give you an idea of his ballast, and you'd better believe he can throw his weight around.

And that is as hot a sketch as we're going to take time to draw of the chief astrogator of this department.

Well, Pluto Water on Pluto, but here we are down to Earth again. Journey's end, you rocket rookies! See you next month. Remember, cruise with us and you see the Universe!

—SERGEANT SATURN,
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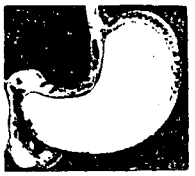

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LOOKING FORWARD

(Continued from page 101)

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Note: You can obtain one of these buttons for only 15c by accompanying your order with the namestrip of the cover of this magazine, so that the date and title of the magazine show, and the namestrip from one other of our companion scientifiction magazines, STARTLING STORIES or CAPTAIN FUTURE.

AMATEUR CONTEST NEWS

TWO Honorable Mention awards in last month's contest for amateur authors! Short stories by D. B. Thompson, of Lincoln, Nebraska, and Matthew Harlib, of Brooklyn, N. Y., came pretty close to winning prizes, according to the decision of the judges.

But the contest is still going on, and there's no reason why you, you, and you can't vie for a first prize.

Each month the editors of T.W.S. read scores of stories by fantasy followers in a hunt for new talent. So far seven amateur scribes have rung the bell. Their stories have been featured in previous issues.

If you have an idea for an original story, and if you have never sold a story before, then you are eligible to participate in this contest. Any type of scientifiction theme, written up in less than six thousand words in length, is welcome. Type up your story, double-spaced, and send it to AMATEUR WRITERS' EDITOR, THRILLING WONDER STORIES, 10 East 40th St., New York City, N. Y. Enclose a stamped, self-addressed envelope for the return of your manuscript should it prove unavailable.

If your story is a fairly good one, we will be glad to publish it. If your story is in need of revision, our editors will make suggestions. And if you show any ability at

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all, we're always glad to show encouragement. So try us out, even if you've entered a manuscript before. Prize stories are purchased at the same rates paid our staff contributors.

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To obtain a FREE certificate of membership, tear off the namestrip of the cover of this magazine and send it along with the application appearing on this page to SCIENCE FICTION LEAGUE, 10 East 40th St., New York City, N. Y., enclosing a stamped, self-addressed envelope.

And readers—write our Sergeant Saturn a regular monthly letter. Tell him which stories you like best, which are your favorite features and artists. Your suggestions and criticisms have made T.W.S. scientifiction's leading magazine. Help us maintain that leadership.—THE EDITOR.

LEAGUE CHAPTER NEWS

Philadelphia Science Fiction Society

The Philadelphia Science Fiction Society is once again holding regular bi-weekly meetings. Every other Saturday evening Philadelphia fandom convenes at 1700 Frankford Avenue and discusses science fiction and allied subjects.

At the recent annual reorganization meeting, the following officers were elected: Alexander M. Phillips, noted science fiction writer, was elected to the Presidency; Robert A. Madle became Secretary, and Ben Lesser was elected Treasurer.

Members of the PSFS, in addition to those mentioned above, include such prominent fans as Milton A. Rothman, who writes s-f under the pseudonym of "Lee Gregor," John V. Baltadonis, Jack Agnew, Oswald Train,—and others.

All readers of science and fantasy fiction residing in or around Philadelphia are invited to join up with us. Merely write to Robert A. Madle, 333 E. Belgrade Street, Philadelphia, Pa.

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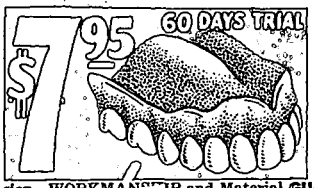

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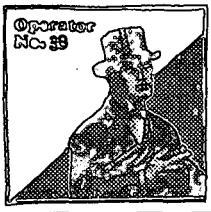

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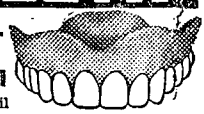

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OUT OF THE YEARS

(Concluded from page 117)

the red tail, licked and caressed it with flame. The ports melted, the strusses, the entire jet factory. The red ship suddenly grew small and round, flared up in an explosion—a violent, multi-colored burst with a dark center, and disappeared. . . .

MIDDLEBURY'S worried face appeared in the Visograph as the yellow ship swung into the Earth's orbit. Now it looked like an old, battered space tramp. Her once gleaming, sleek yellow hull seemed to have been slapped by zodiacal comets.

Bare patches of metal showed through. Two starboard portholes were blackened. The port jet was sluggishly blasting. But inside, its occupants were cheerful enough.

"Coming in!" Jones reported briefly. "Where do we stand, you ape!"

"Looks mighty promising," Middlebury said anxiously. "You're way ahead of schedule. Delinger's your only close rival. He last reported about two thousand behind you—"

"Not any more," Jones interrupted gently.

"Still interested in Minton?" asked Middlebury mischievously.

"You bet!" Jones said promptly.

Middlebury nodded.

"Are you coming in on Course Three? Yes? Then watch out for a black prison transport on its way out. Minton is on it with a life ticket. That guy you caught at the spaceport finally squealed. Minton put him up to that murder job. He thought the professor was you—"

Then Lorna was tugging at Jones' sleeve.

"Look, there it is!" she cried. "See it?"

The huge prison liner, black as the conscience of the doomed men it carried, hurtled by their craft in an impatient rush. The pilot signalled a hello and congratulations to Jones for his winning the race and for Minton's downfall.

"Just passed Minton," reported Jones. "I don't think he's looking so good."

Middlebury grinned back.

"Say, there's just one more thing," he said hopefully. "With that Federation contract as good as in your pocket, Captain Jones, you don't suppose you could use a reliable flight super, do you?" He waited anxiously, mouth open.

"Say yes," Lorna whispered, and Jones nodded.

"Sure, Middlebury!" he called back. "And I want you to be best man at my wedding. See you soon!"

Flicking off the Visograph, he turned to Lorna.

"Darn it," he said, "there's something I keep forgetting to give you." Digging into an inside pocket, he pulled out the gold bracelet he had once found in space on a derelict named the *Lorna,* and put it around her wrist.

She looked at it wonderingly and then her eyes lighted.

"From Lorna to Lorna!" he said, and sped in to victory.

NEXT ISSUE

THE LAND OF TIME TO COME

A Complete Book-Length Novel
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THE STORY BEHIND THE STORY

(Concluded from page 12)

desperate flight, and some accident cause him to lose trace of his homeland? Would not Man always think of the green planet that spawned him, and old Sol that warmed him?

Supposing some cosmic cataclysm altered the very Solar System, and changed the surface of Earth itself. Would those future adventurers, cruising the depths of space for their lost homeland, recognize the planet that spawned them?

Those questions, and others, came to me, that velvety night, as I sat about that dying fire. But it was not until some time later that I sat down to the typewriter and hammered out THE LOST PLANET.

Back to the Ancients

NOTE TO READERS: Please do not read Mr. Kummer's letter explaining the basis for STRANGER FROM THE STARS until you have read the story.

Remember several issues back, when we showed how scientifiction authors have gone back to mythology to find material for their stories? We gave chapter and verse, telling how the myths that have come down to present-day Man from antiquity may have more than a few sparks of truth behind them, if explained in the light of science.

In his fine novelet, STRANGER FROM THE STARS, Frederic Arnold Kummer, Jr., has made use of a new method of plot-excavating. We think it's a neat stunt, and we'd like to see it repeated. Whether the author may do so remains up to you readers. Here's Kummer with the lowdown as to how he actually spun the story:

Perhaps the most interesting of all Biblical stories is that of Elijah the prophet. His ancestry is obscure and he appears on the scene rather suddenly. We find that he restored a dead boy, that he possessed a blasting fire with which he destroyed the pagan priests and the soldiers of Ahab. And in the end he rose to heaven in a blazing chariot.

Without wish to offend, I wrote STRANGER FROM THE STARS as a rationalization, or perhaps a fantasy based on a theory that fits the story ideally. A man from another world, his space ship wrecked, might well have landed in ancient Israel. And his scientific feats would be surely classed as miracles.

Simple drugs might have restored the dead boy, as adrenalin does in some cases today. The blasting fire he used against his enemies would be perhaps a heat-gun . . . which would also enable him to cross a stream dryshod.

His ability to outrun chariots might be due to muscles accustomed to the gravity of a larger planet and his ability to prophesy the result of great scientific wisdom. And his ascent in a blazing chariot might be his departure in a rescue ship of his own planet, its rocket exhausts flaming.

Indeed, the story of Elijah constitutes a perfect science story, completely plotted and needing only the writing. To Biblical students I apologize for certain poetic license, such as placing the confutation of the priests at Ahab's palace instead of Mt. Carmel.

Also, the condensation of time, the placing of the battle with Ahab's warriors after his visit to the palace instead of before, the elimination of certain episodes of travel which lead to little, and the rolling into one of the restored boy and the disciple Elisha, though in this latter instance vagueness on the part of the Biblical story admits of it as a possibility. None of these errata is serious, I believe, and since I was restricted as to length such liberties were necessary.

Thus, if I have taken liberties to present an interesting (I hope) story without detracting from the majestic character of the prophet, my literary conscience is clear.

If this story is well-liked, I have others based on Biblical characters in mind.

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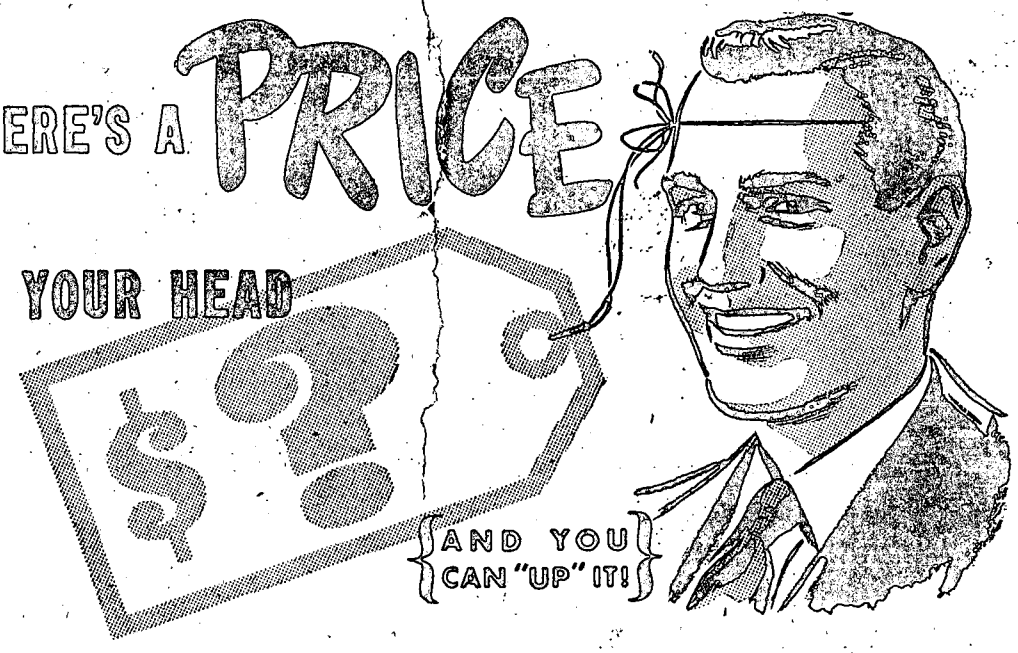

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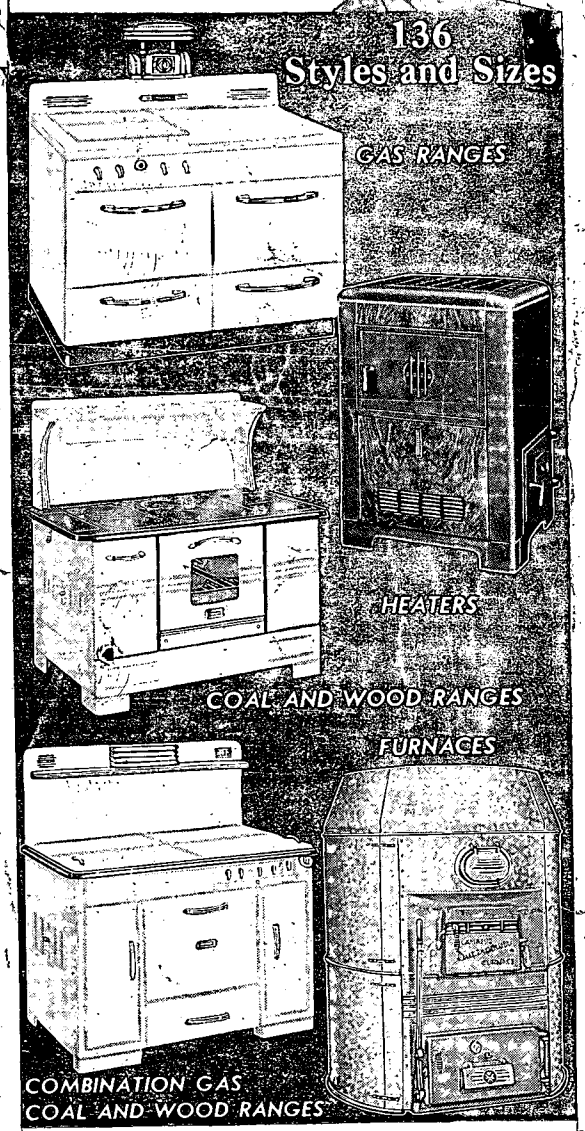

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